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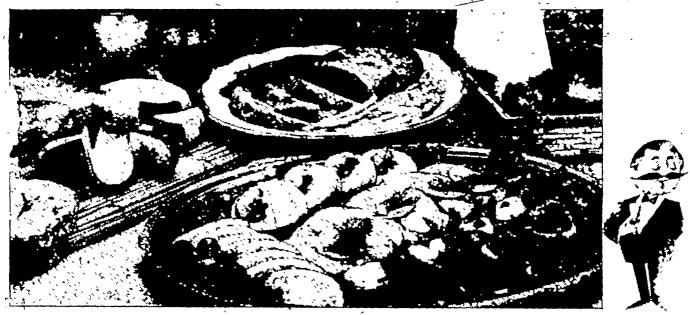


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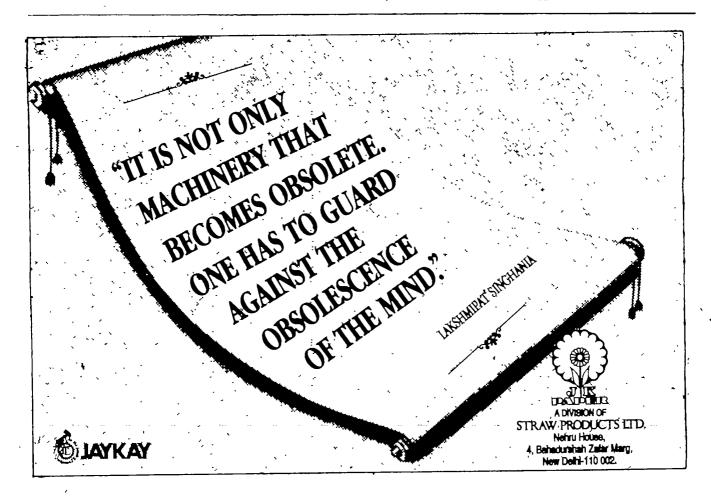
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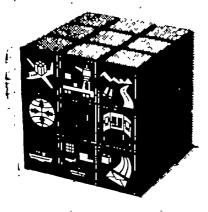
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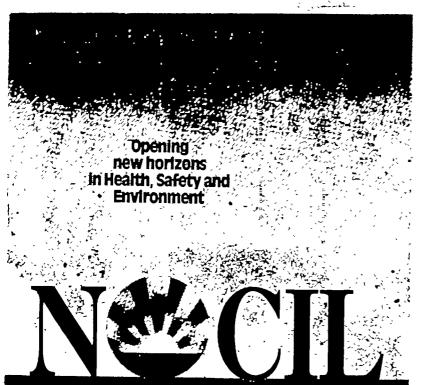
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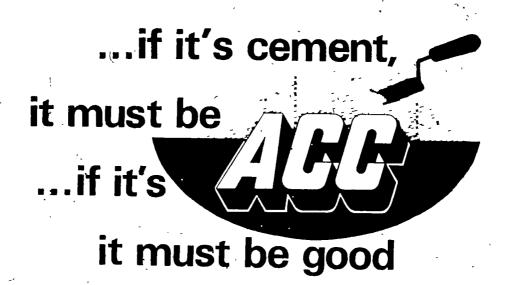
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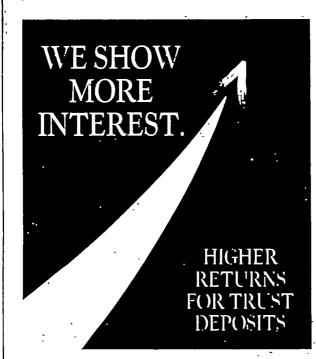
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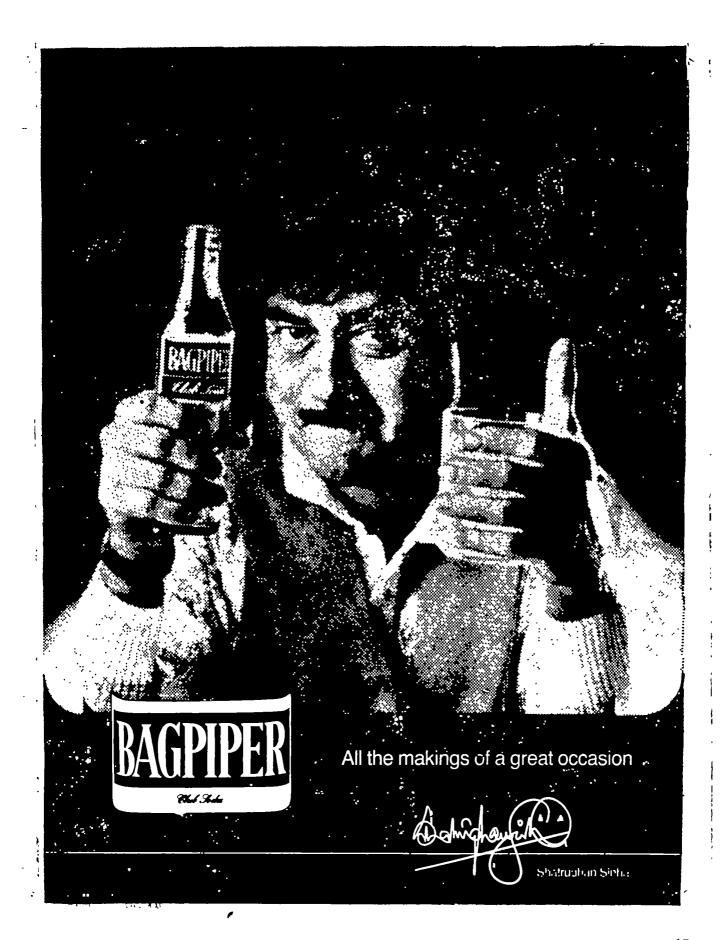
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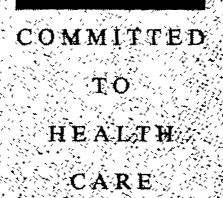
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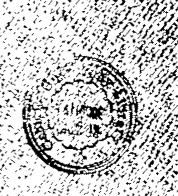
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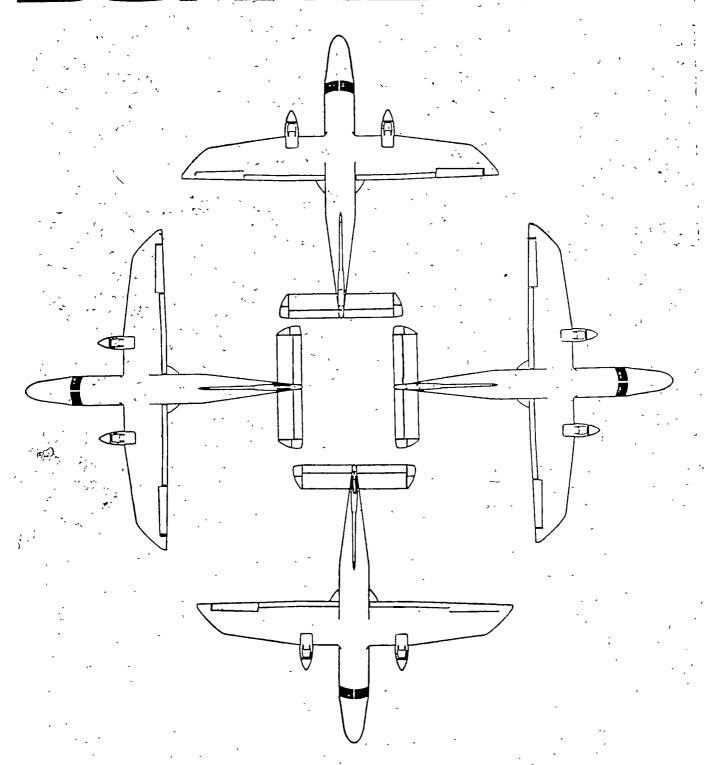








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sher MALVIKA SINGH

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# This centre cannot hold

RAJNI KOTHARI

WITH our entry into the last decade of the 20th century the count-down towards a no-man's land has begun. In a way one is already witnessing the end of the 20th century, of the key parameters that had defined its identity and provided a framework of organizing human existence. This is true of both the darker and the brighter sides of reality.

The century saw two 'world wars' and unprecedented militarization of the globe, giving rise to strategic projections towards a third world war on which several books of a futuristic kind were written. That scenario has since eclipsed. The cold war that followed the Second World War was credited by some of having contained that possibility through a framework of deterrence based on an escalating arms race whose purpose, we were told, was to prepare for a war that will never take place. The cold war is now no more.

The same has happened to the elaborate structure of a bipolar world, held in balance by two superpowers, which provided a framework of stability and peacehowsoever fragile and mind-boggling that structure might have been. Such a framework no longer exists. With it has also gone the capacity of smaller powers the world over and especially in the third world to manoeuvre their way about and gain spaces for themselves, including the ability to carve out special regional and ideological niches through which they could 'de-link' from the rival systems seeking to establish world hegemony.

Curiously, with the demise of bipolarism the structure of a multi-lateral world that third world leaders aspired to has gone too. So has their ability to gain support for liberation struggles, NAM, G77 or challenges to Western hegemony, ranging from OPEC to the Iranian

Revolution. Gone, too, is the aspiration for a New International Economic Order, the effort to make the United Nations an instrument for global equity and self-reliance, not to speak of the alternative models that countries like China and India (though in very different ways) were at one time poised to provide.

The Gulf War brought home dramatically that world politics had undergone a sudden denouementthe collapse of the countervailing role of the Soviet Union, of the United Nations, of third world leadership. From now on the future of Palestine and peace and stability in the Middle East or the final phase of liberation of South Africa or indeed of Cuba (the last vestige of socialism), as also the definition of what constituted democracy and human rights, is going to depend on US charity and 'statesmanship'. In the bargain, it will transform the whole world towards corporate techno-capitalism and the conditionalities of the IMF and the World

In one massive sweep, following Gorbachev's 'glasnost' and Bush's 'perestroika', the world we live in has changed beyond recognition. Whatever the 21st century may hold out to an increasingly unstable and poverty-stricken world, the fine balance on which the 20th century had held out rudiments of a stable 'world order' based on diverse actors and processes has all but given in. The rest of the 1990s seem set to complete this derailment towards an uncertain future dominated by one single power who, however, cannot be trusted to wield power with responsibility.

Nor is the dramatic demise of the 20th century limited to the global structure of power and institutions. It goes deeper. Politically, the framework of sovereign and centralized nation-states providing both autonomy and diversity is fast being eroded with attacks mounting from both

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the global structure of power relations and the subnational (both regional and social) peripheries within these states which have become increasingly vulnerable to pressures emanating from growing instability all around.

Economically, the idea of economic development reducing poverty and providing welfare for all has been all but given up in the fanatic march of modern technology and transnational corporations (representing a new mutation in human evolution) and the philosophy of integration into a world market which means integration of the world middle class and the increasing marginalization and dispensability of the mass of the people. And socially, the two 20th century promises, of the Keynesian revolution that rescued capitalism from its grave human costs and possible demise as a social order and the socialist revolution that promised to provide an alternative to it, have gone under. They have given in to a 'new vision' based on the revival of the market as a means of not just preserving the status quo but enabling it to withstand pressures from various underclasses of the world (including large parts of several nations and nationalities).

In both the Keynesian and the socialist perspectives the state played a central role, both ameliorative and productive, and the poor and the unemployed were the focal points of public policy. This is now not to be. In the meanwhile the revolutionary role assigned to new technologies is designed to provide a new class structure from which millions could be effectively excluded. They are not needed any more. Together, both the end of the global framework of power relations and the basic shifts in political, economic and social structures underlying that framework signal an end to the world we have known and had come to rely on in the 20th century.

It was a century that saw the emergence into independent nation-hood of a large part of humanity that had come to believe that it could, together and severally, chart out a distinctive future for itself. This too seems to have come to

pass, at least as far as the elites of the 'third world' are concerned though not for the peoples of the third world who have as much stake in transforming the present reality as have the corporate and transnational actors, though of course in the opposite direction. But then so much depends on how effective 'people's power' can be against the enormous onslaught and backlash of elite power, both global and national (as also local).

With the collapse of the idea of the third world have also come to pass ideas of self-reliance, collective self-reliance, NIEO and alternative paths to both development and identity. In their place have come an entirely new set of ideas-interdependence, integration into a world market, competition and rivalry between third world societies, consumerism and the homogenizing thrust of mass media and ad agencies, All these are promoted by economists and technocrats as bearers of 'universal' values which they are trying to ram down diverse societies, corrupt bureaucrats and still more corrupt—and easily corruptible—politicians and leaders of NGOs, diplomats and UN experts, and journalists who have sold their souls before the cash nexus. 'People's power' has to contend with all this. As have the ideas of decentralization, federalism and democracy. But not just people's power, also the power of third world states and their role in charting out a distinctive path for their societies.

When one turns to India, one finds a dramatic change in the 'scenario' following a fast eclipse of the basic elements that had provided the country its rationale and identity during the second half of the 20th century. There has taken place an abrupt end of the dynasty that had so much shaped the contours of not just the Indian polity but the whole structure of the elite. This dynasty and its vast network of patronage—scientists, most leading journalists, all the powerful bureaucrats, a whole range of professionals in the arts, humanities, the universities and academies, leading industrialists, managers and technocrats, actors and media stars, even a large number of social activists, enjoying

influence and clout with voluntary organizations—had operated through the Indian state and within the state through the centre in New Delhi, whose authority and legitimacy today lie in a shambles. It is under attack from both global forces seeking to steamroll nations into a dead uniformity of finance and technology and, at the opposite end, from diverse regions and social streams that are up in arms against the colonial centre and its armed might through which it is still trying to maintain its authority.

The other framework, of integrating the wide spaces of civil society into a national monolith of a centralized state that was sensitive to diverse aspirations, is being fast eroded. It is being replaced by a strife-ridden social structure from which the centre is being increasingly alienated and turned into a mere residue of 'law and order' always asked to send more and more companies of para-military forces and the army which are left free to rampage through the various regions and their people (women included) that they treat as occupied territories. Even here, the central authority no longer enjoys the monopoly of coercive power (the classic definition of the 'state') and its writ does not run all over the country.

Indeed, it does not run in large parts of the country, including (as far as the writ of the centre is concerned) in entire states and substates. A few determined batches of militants are able to keep the entir state apparatus and its armed battalions equipped with enormous fire power at bay. They are able to force the government to 'negotiate' with them the terms of releasing the kith and kin of political leaders whom they have been able to hold captive by resort to dare-devil acts of kidnapping—this being the latest and most effective instrument in the armoury of insurgents.

It is a strange irony that the only recourse to 'political dialogue' that is taking place is at the initiative of the militants. As far as the pious declarations of one government after another of starting a political dialogue are concerned, the reality

is that none of these governments even know how to go about starting such a dialogue; who to dialogue with and how. The few bold attempts that were made, for example by George Fernandes in Kashmir (or in a different way by Nirmal Mukherjee in Punjab), were stopped half-way by New Delhi under the influence of politico-bureaucratic vested interests.

The overall result is that the time for 'reviving the political process' (as being currently talked of by Congress ministers) may already have run out. For years now, starting with the Emergency, some of us have been arguing for restoring the larger political process that had been deliberately allowed to wither under the highly personalized, arbitrary and apolitical structure that had come into being, but to no avail. (Incidentally, it was because of harping on this theme, in the July 1976 issue of Seminar that pre-censorship was imposed leading to the decision by its Editor to suspend publication). The fact is that those at the helm in the dynastic court of New Delhi had no interest in restoring the larger political process, nor in solving any major problem facing an increasingly beleagured state lest the strategy of keeping various pots boiling and making everyone look to the colonial centre be affected.

Now, of course, even this is not working and the various alienated regions (Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, Jharkhand, Chhattisgharh, Uttarkhand, even the Tamils in the deep south) and social strata (the dalits, the Muslims, the backwards, the tribals in some regions, the Sikhs in Punjab) have decided to give the centre a go-by and build their own fortresses. They have armed themselves for the purpose, legitimizing the use of violence against a state apparatus that is itself resorting to more and viòlence and terror and yet found to be weak and vulnerable on so many counts. It is precisely this drastically weakened and increasingly fragile state that has made the government run to foreign powers and global institutions to bail it out, in the process recolonizing India. And this at a time when the global scene has itself been transformed, eroding the few spaces that were once available.

The emerging scenario is that of the state in India under attack from both within and without, following the acute polarization in the social structure under conditions of growing alienation of not just large masses of the people but of a growing number of communities and regions. At the same time it is being nibbled away not just by 'white ants' creeping into the governing structure, often at the very apex in government departments, but also by vultures from outside its domain (till recently supposed to be a sovereign and independent state). This can no longer be dealt with by mere holding operations or tinkerings on the surface.

The same applies to the serious erosion of the environment and natural resources that is assuming dangerous proportions. It applies equally to the growing dangers from hazardous technologies and ill-conceived mega projects that are affecting the very survival of millions of people and their community lifestyles. In the process large sections of the middle class have turned parasitic—and are now being offered as a 'market' to external parasites— and are found to have lost all contact with the poor and the dispossessed.

This is not a situation that can 'somehow' be held together. It calls for rethinking on the development package and basic restructuring of the institutional fabric of governance through which the mass of the people, and the communities and regions in which they are located, become partners in the challenge of rebuilding the state. They could then integrate the civil society into an organic unity that is able to weave together its various pluralities as well as peripheries and is equipped to pursue a course of deveopment that is decentralized, just and humane.

The basic issue facing such an attempt at restructuring the overall framework of both governance and development is this: how to channelize social energy, at the moment full of tension and turbulence—and communal exploitation thereof—into institutional spaces in which

diverse entities are able to find place along a federal axis that reaches out from the grass-roots to the centre. Narasimha Rao's insistence on giving development priority over governance at both the CHOGM and the G15 summits entirely misses the point that, left to its own logic and without direct involvement of the people through a democratic structure of governance, development, particularly of the modern bureaucratic type, can turn anti-people.

he twin dimensions along which the system is facing defiance and disaffection are social on the one hand and regional on the other. The centre cannot hold against this double onslaught except through a genuinely federal, if necessary confederal, structure that is carried right down to where the people live, with intermediate units of the substate and inter-state kinds. The point is to respond to both the demands for social justice and equity and those for autonomy and self-determination through one common framework of political participation.

I have been involved in the past six years in a series of conventions on 'Federalism and. Threats to Diversity' in which political leaders from various regions and social groups have met with activists and intellectuals to thrash out a common approach to social struggles for equity and democratic rights and regional movements for greater autonomy and self-determination. These have been quite different from academic seminars on centre-state relations.

Leaders and representatives of diverse dalit organisations, tribal communities, backward classes, Muslims and Christian communities have interacted with leaders of political parties and movements from various regions (Punjab, Assam, Jharkhand, Chhattisgharh, Uttarkhand, Bundelkhand, Gurkhaland, Vidharbha, Telangana and others). And, at the end of eight such conventions held in different parts of the country, they have decided to launch a common platform both for creating a democratic and decentralized structure and for this purpose reorganizing the federal map of the country. It was also felt that both

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the communal virus and the threat posed by global corporate interests could be tackled only by a federalized structure under which the centre could not barter away our independence while sectarian movements could be easily contained once the people belonging to diverse communities are able to sort things out themselves in various local settings.

Sentiments in favour of a genuine federal structure in which vital functions and powers are enjoyed both by and within the states by decentralized units have also been generally growing. Leaders and chief ministers from various states (Karnataka, West Bengal, Andhra Pradash, Tamilnadu, Punjab, Assam and Jammu and Kashmir) have had a series of 'conclaves' in the recent past. The conviction that some of the states were too grotesque and there was need to go in for a federal structure consisting of small states, has been growing (with even some leaders of the BJP, otherwise quite centrist and chauvinist, supporting the idea). There has already emerged a consensus across parties and successive governments on a constitutional amendment for establishing panchayati raj bodies and their counterparts in urban areas.

L here is also a growing consensus that the present centralized model just cannot deliver the goods. If we are to really attend to the acute problems of poverty and unemployment and contain social strife and violence, we need to move towards a genuinely federal and decentralized structure. But of course, far more important than this development of thinking on a suitable governing structure (such a consensus on the need for greater federalism did not exist even five years ago), is the fact that the centre just cannot cope with the rise in Intensity of both the movements launched by diverse communities (social and ethnic) and of regional autonomy and self-determination. The country has already moved in a direction in which regional and ethnic entities in various states are already challenging and limiting the power of the centre. The latter cannot put these down except by increasing resort to force. But even this is not working.

In the meanwhile, the growing militancy of movements in Punjab and the Kashmir valley and Assam and the slow but clear emergence of the same in Jharkhand and Chhatisgharh and other regions has caught the centre napping and increasingly unable to respond. The same is the case with class struggles and working class movements. Again the only response from ruling circles (both governments and industrialists) is a resort to force and intimidation, hiring mafia groups and criminals for this purpose.

L his was brought home in a tragic and traumatic manner in the brutal assassination of Shankar Guha Niyogi. One of the most creative and sensitive leaders of the trade union movement, he had endeavoured to both raise wages and provide status and dignity to workers coming from tribal communities. At the same time, he engaged in education and social reform among them by making them give up their drinking habits and, in the process, invited the wrath and ire of liquor and related industries. Just when he was succeeding against the latter and had also established his independence of the BIP government in Madhya Pradesh, they decided to do him in

There followed a nation-wide revulsion against this dastardly act and, together with the increasingly felt need to resist the economic package of privatization and the spectre of growing unemployment and inflation that lies in store for it, the working class movement is also likely to take on a more militant form. Altogether, lacking a clear shift in the direction of a more democratic and accountable structure of governance, the division between the rulers and the ruled is going to sharpen further.

It is time to move out of old grooves and think afresh. The key to this thinking has to be with respect to the nature, role and structure of the state vis-a-vis the people. It should also be one that can enable both governments and the people—and various parties and voluntary groups—to put an end or at least substantially contain the strife and violence that today cha-

racterize relations between regions and communities. Much rethinking on these issues has taken place all over the world and major institutional and constitutional reforms have been under way. Do we still have to go on merrily following the same old ways and allow the body politic to be afflicted by various eruptions and festering of old wounds? Or shall we too, like the Soviets, wait till a coup of some sort or another takes place and makes us realize that we were running too top-heavy a structure to be able to handle any of the immense problems that stare us in the

Should we just be willing to be bailed out of a temporary problem by undertaking 'structural adjustments' of the IMF variety or should we ourselves engage in more basic structural transformation that enables us to 'open up' to our own people, and to the states and regions that are seeking a greater role in running the country and to local communities keen on deepening the democratic structure than merely to the MNCs? And should we respond to an already emerging ideological consensus in favour of federalism or wait till we are forced to accept it as a result of growing confrontations?

n the answers to these questions will depend India's capacity to survive as a united whole in which the centre's integrating role is more catalytic than usurping, more an agent of producing a consensus than a source of alienation. Right now, as things stand and are likely to develop, it does not seem that the centre can hold various constituent structures for long. Nor can it be in a position to attend to basic issues of poverty and inequity and the large incidence of social tension and violence that they generate, or contain the virus of communalism. For this to happen it must be willing to create a vibrant federal and decentralized structure of governance for both resolving outstanding disputes between various states or nationalities and the centre and dealing with social cleavages and polarizations and the sources of growing violence and disaffection in the polity.

The need is for courage to wrest initiative, move out of false complacency despite so much instability in the system, and create structures through which major confrontations of both social and regional kinds can be mediated in ways that promote justice and fulfilment of democratic rights along both these dimensions. The attempt to seek 'consensus' by mere consultations within the established elite structure is an exercise in futility. For it is not genuine consensus which is based on agreements across opposing entities and in which those involved in struggles against the establishment are persuaded to participate. To achieve this there is need to move out of conventional modes of both thinking and action. Loose discussions with leaders of opposition parties or even a few militants that the centre finds amenable, will not do.

here has been a sharp decline in credibility following Blue Star, the dismissal of a duly elected government and continuous postponement of the electoral process. Too much stress is being laid on deploying the army and para-military forces who are clearly seen as the enemy by not just the militants but large sections of the population too. In all this the basic demands with which the whole thing started. well summed up in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, have been given a go-by. There can be no solution of the Punjab issue except by openly accepting the federal idea as incorporated in that Resolution and willingness to hand over power to individuals and groups that are found credible by both the militants and the people. To think of any of these as 'anti-national' and push them more and more into the arms of Pakistani agents is just the wrong thing to doe to be not be of the

It is also wrong to hold Pakistan responsible for 'terrorism' in Punjab. The fact is that the problem has been created by the centre itself, following dismissal of elected regimes and manipulation of the democratic process. Even now the temptation will be to manipulate the electoral process through rigging and creating an atmosphere of terror which is bound to alienate the militants and various groups and parties operating in Punjab. This should be firmly resisted by New Delhi.

Dimilarly, only a fresh and unconventional approach, again based on extending the federal idea to the specific situation in Kashmir can, even at this late stage, lead us to a viable way out of what looks like a 'no-win' situation. The desire for independence can be interpreted as one for still greater autonomy and freedom from manipulation and double talk by the central government and political groups like the National Conference. There should be no hesitation to discuss the issue with Pakistan and come to a formulation acceptable to all (even marginally involving a representative of the UN in such an effort). Incidentally, the time has also come to utilize the atmosphere created by the end of the global cold war to end the cold war between India and Pakistan, reduce levels of militarization and for both countries to attend to more pressing issues at home.

I could go on with major problem areas facing the country: Assam, Jharkhand, Chhattisgharh, Uttarkhand, Telengana and so forth, and in a different way, the problem of the Tamils (which is not merely one of Eelam in Sri Lanka but also for us in India). And to dwell again on the other set of problem areas, following the upsurge of consciousness among the dalits, the tribals, the backward classes and the minorities. But enough is said to indicate that it is 'only by moving towards a broadly confederal approach in which freedom and justice are promoted through a structure that makes governance not just decentralized but also one in which diverse communities and regions are enabled to provide to the people a real stake in the system and an ability to put an end to inequity and alienation that further disintegration of the country can be avoided. The present system just cannot do this. But it can be made flexible enough to produce new institutional modes for coming forward with new solutions. Failure to do this will only pave the way to the disintegration of this subcontinental 41 polity.

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# Congress without dynasty

HARISH KHARE

THOSE who pride themselves as past masters of realpolitik have steadfastly refused to acknowledge. the baneful consequences of the twodecade long dominance of the Nehru-Gandhi family over the Congress. Indeed these students of realpolitik have been disdainful of any talk of dynasty as a mere vulgar expression of petty bourgeois mentality. The brutal assassination of Rajiv Gandhi provided these votaries of the Nehru-Gandhi family enough reason to justify the dynasty's influence and dominance over the Congress as entirely wholesome and historically inevitable.

Yet, without meaning any disrespect to the memory of Rajiv Gandhi or his mother, it is incumbent to understand what the dynasty did to the Congress, and by extension, to the Indian polity. After all, one cannot pretend that the kind of dominance Indira Gandhi, and later Rajiv Gandhi, insisted upon did not adversely affect Congressmen, their political morals, civic manners and ethical standards.

The dominance became particularly acute after the massive 1984 mandate for Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress. And it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that most of our problems which today seem so intractable—Kashmir, Punjab, Assam, and even the economy—can be traced backets the entirely un-

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equal terms of relationship between the leader and the led in the then ruling party. Slowly but surely the dynasty inflicted a dysfunctionality on the Congress which, by extension, eroded all our constitutional and political institutions. It will be difficult for Congressmen to renew themselves collectively without understanding their immediate past.

L he crux of the problem is that even before the 1984 Lok Sabha elections Rajiv Gandhi had been encouraged to believe that the Congress was a family heirloom. This belief was reinforced by the almost illegal manner in which his groupies could browbeat President Zail Singh (assuming he needed any browbeating) to induct Gandhi as a fullfledged prime minister (without election as the leader of the Congress legislature party and without even the charade of an endorsement from the Congress Parliamentary Board or the Congress Working Committee), after Indira Gandhi's assassination. The massive mandate a few weeks later was heady enough to give birth to a myth that the Congress was beholden to him, rather than the other way round. His friends and hangers-on drilled into him the notion that the party drew not only its political acceptability and respectability but even its legitimacy from the simple fact that he presided over it.1

Apart from the aberrations, absurdities and arrogance this notion bred in the young prime minister's approach to public affairs, national issues and constitutional niceties, it inevitably ended up putting the Congress organization on an altogether different footing. The traditional Congressman and his way of practising the craft of politics were held in contempt by Rajiv Gandhi and his closest advisers. This contempt was soon quite forcefully and breathtakingly articulated in the

peroration at the Bombay AICC session in December 1985.

In the leader's perspective, uninformed as it was either by an intellectual or scholarly training or by a prolonged political apprenticeship, the traditional Congressman was at best a nuisance. While the task of administering the country was to be left to professional bureaucrats and managers, the innovation and imagination in policymaking would be provided by the non-party, technocratic coterie the leader had gathered around him. The traditional Congressman was as much at a discount as was his experience and insight. In fact, the poor chap was dispensable. And so was the party.

There was thus a clear dichotomy between the leader and the led. This had the effect of frittering away the party's two traditional advantages—tremendous goodwill that accrued to it from being perceived as a party of the national independence and the benefit of the doubt it got from being perceived as a natural party of governance.

A his repudiation of the past had two unhealthy consequences. First, the Congress as a whole gradually moved away from its most enduring and rewarding strategy of accommodation, co-option and inclusion. Since the new leader was deemed to be blessed with an eternal charisma and obviously had at his command the best and the brightest advertisers and image-makers to mesmerize the electorate endlessly, the partymen gradually learned to believe that they were under no compulsion to address themselves to the nuts and bolts of political life; instead, that they should feel gratifled whenever given a chance to demonstrate that they were in total awe of the leader. The average partyman was made to feel that he need not bother himself with the traditional chores of keeping the electorate in good humour. After all, had not all the pundits proclaimed the concept of TINA (There Is No Alternative) about Rajiv Gandhi?

Soon the party ceased to be a source of hope for this discontented segment, or for assuaging the ruffled feelings of that group or for redressing the citizens' grievances. Politics for the Congressman acquired an anti-people edge; or at least people or their welfare did not figure in his immediate calculations. Instead he was encouraged to believe that his personal prosperity and political survival depended upon his ability and willingness to fall in line with the demands of the increasingly whimsical Palace Guard.

Ince the import of this message percolated down to the district level. it became corrosive. This meant a snapping of ties between the Congressmen and all those groups and sub-groups at the grass-root level which wanted a place under the sun or which needed protection against the coercive reach of the state as well as those who depend upon politicians for mediation with an otherwise indifferent administration. The political energies of Congressmen were misdirected in counterproductive internal squabbles. Factional disputes, never a new phenomenon in the Congress, assumed a blinding fierceness. Neither the prospect of damage to the organizational structure nor the fear of public disapprobation would deter or slow down the warring factions as long as they had a hope that the omnipresent and omnipotent 'high command' might still cast a benign glance in their direction.

Unencumbered with partymen and under no obligation to heed their advice, Rajiv Gandhi introduced new notions of development, growth and progress. It was essentially a non-resident Indian (NRI) perspective in which the prosperity of the country was deemed to be synonymous with the well-being of a small segment of an avaricious business community and consumerist upper middle classes, and equated with a few outward visible symbols. For this the young leader was soon hailed, predictably enough, for finding the courage to liberate the country from the Nehruvian hang-ups about a socialistic pattern of society. The economy was opened up to a host of external forces which, in turn,

<sup>1.</sup> For example, after Rajiv Gandhi's death, a devotee wrote: 'He could have led a cushloned life, just the royalities from books that his grandfather and mother wrote would have been enough to give him a comfortable life. But you can't have a heritage like this and spurn public life.' Rajeev Desal, 'Shourle and Ram. please answer to Sonia', The Times of India, 29 May 1991.

<sup>2.</sup> See the revelations in a remarkably candid interview Rajiv Gandhi gave to Dhiren Bhagat in October 1985. Reproduced in *The Contemporary Conservative* (Viking: 1990), pp. 216-30.

began to make not so wholesome demands on the polity. Nothing was seen amiss in all this because under Rajiv Gandhi the Congress had already moved away from its nationalist mantel. Economic self-sufficiency or national self-respect were no longer cherished. Economic policies were calculated to woo the non-resident Indian businessmen; and, at home, the upper middle classes were seduced into a raging love affair.

Soon it was obvious that these unchecked and unquestioned dynastic pretensions were beginning to make exacting demands on the efficacy and morals of the administration and overwhelm the liberal temper of the polity. The combination brought about a brutalization of our collective public discourse and political exchange. The decision-making system was so overburdened with dynastic aberrations that it could not cope when things did not work out according to the preferences of the Rajiv Gandhi establishment.<sup>3</sup>

During all this the traditional Congressman was reduced to a mute spectator. The accent was on pragmatism, a euphemism for the amoral pursuit of selfish interests; ideology was at a discount. Intellectual and political vacuity left the Congressmen so enfeebled and unnerved that they were in no position to counter either the BJP's sectarian interpretation of Indian nationalism or V P Singh's invocation of a moral politics.

Five years of relentless assault on the traditional Congressman and his own sense of usefulness to the organization produced such a severe and acute loss of elan and confidence among the partymen that even after the unequivocal defeat

in the 1989 Lok Sabha elections there were few who dared to think that the relationship between the Congress and Rajiv Gandhi ought to be redefined. On the contrary, there were Congressmen like V N Gadgil who argued that there was no cause for dismay because the party had got 40% of the total vote, the same percentage it had got in the 1980 Lok Sabha poll. The implication was that the party's base was intact, and the coterie around Rajıv Gandhi convinced him and itself that there was no need for any change in his style or thinking. All that needed to be done was to wait around for 'natural contradictions' in the National Front government to throw V P Singh off balance. In the event. the National Front government did collapse much sooner than was expected, because of its internal problems, and those Congressmen who were inclined to question the damage the dynasty had done to the organization were forced to keep their peace.4

It was the same psychological awe of the family that forced the Congress Working Committee to invite Sonia Gandhi to become the party's leader. Despite her unwillingness there was no dearth of partymen and courtiers who kept insisting that the Narasimha Rao arrangement was merely a temporary one. The plain fact of the matter was that irrespective of Sonia Gandhi's personal preference, the Satish Sharmas and R K Dhawans and the influences and the attitudes they represent could not easily be wished away. The nomination of a family retainer like Captain Satish Sharma

to contest the family's pocket borough in Amethi was simply inevitable, once Sonia Gandhi herself had declined the honour. And the kind of dynastic noises Satish Sharma made during his campaign should be sufficient to caution any who believes that the Congress has finally managed to exorcise the dynasty ghost.

However, the longer someone like Narasimha Rao survives in office and makes a reasonable job of it, the more the linkage between the political legitimacy in the Congress and the Nehru family will be weakened. The central task before the Congress therefore is to prove that a non-Nehru-Gandhi family man, too, can deliver the goods. But the administrative instruments of governance have become so blunted and our major problems become so complicated, that it will not be realistic to expect any prime minister to perform miracles. (In fact, no modern-day executive can clear off a heavy domestic agenda of the kind

lobby and the Kennedy crowd to muscle in on the Johnson White House after President Kennedy's assassination. If the otherwise sober and sensible men like Arthur Schlesinger. Averell Harriman, Ted Sorensen and John Kenneth Galbraith could allow themselves to regard Lyndon Johnson as a usurper of what they thought belonged to the Kennedy family, then the uncouth crowd hanging outside 10 Janpath could be excused for wanting to run P V Narasimha Rao out of town. It was, therefore, not at all surprising that someone like K K Tiwari should assert that 'Most of us-even this government and the people who are holding prime positions—owe their positions and existence to Indiraji and Rajivji' (interview in Sunday Observer) Or, someone like Priyaranjan Das Munshi could argue: 'I don't see any reason why Congressmen will not be happy if Sonia takes to politics because of talk of her being a foreigner. All this is nonsense. If you take the history of the Congress from Alan Hume to Annie Besant to Sister Nivedita, the masses' acceptance is not based on the colour of the skin but on their identification with the masses. Tell me, which Indian is not delighted to have a picture taken with Mother Teresa? (Interview, Current, 5 October 1991).

6. According to a report, the Congress campaigners in Amethi were arguing: 'Like Ram's Hanuman, he (Capt. Sharma) is a true sevak, with no other loyalty save that towards the family. Like Ram's brother Bharat, he is merely looking after the throne, until the family is once again ready to reclaim it.' See The Week, 17 November 1991.

<sup>3.</sup> Here the problem was a familiar one. Take the parallel case of Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan. Despite a formidable track record of having opposed tooth and nail the Zia-ul-Haq regine, and then subjecting herself to the rough and tumble of a vicious electoral process, Bhutto could not disabuse herself of her mental framework that she drew her legitlmacy and acceptability from association with a martyred father. This self-image, more than anything else, contributed to her fall from the pedestal.

<sup>4.</sup> See 'The Great Suicide', Mainstream, 27 January 1990 by a leading Congressman who had perforce to seek the protection of a pseudonym. Interestingly, even after the 1989 Lok Sabha defeat, Rajiv Gandhi could not see the need to change even his style. Nandini Satpathy, for example, could not meet him for nearly 12 days. The then 'Chief Minister of Gujarat, Amarsinh Chaudhary, had to cool his heels in Gujarat Bhavan for 10 days before he was granted permussion to leave New Delhi. And, Shyam Charan Shukla, the newly appointed Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, felt obligad to acknowledge to newsmen in Bhopal: 'You all know that state cabinets are finalized in Delhi.'

Here again the problem was a familiar one. Let us recall the historical parallel between the attempt made by the Sonia

which a decade ago seemed possible and attractive.) However, what the Congress can do is to reorient itself once again as an instrument of social transformation, with a commitment to competent and compassionable government.

The Congress will not be able to approach this task adequately unless it were to put its internal arrangement on a firm democratic footing. Despite the persistent talk of the Sonia lobby and the far from dead coterie, the very fact that the Congress spokesman, Professor C P Thakur, could talk (in August 1991, much before anybody could be sure whether or not Sonia Gandhi would contest from Amethi) of the party wishing 'to steer the course of Indian politics from personalitybased to issue-based politics' indicated that the chemistry within the organization was changing The first step in this direction will, then, obviously be to put the leadership's authority and legitimacy on a democratic footing.

A beginning seems to have been made already. The process of organizational elections (at the time of writing in the last week of November) is slowly getting under way. And what is more, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and his other senior colleagues remain, for all outward appearances, committed to carrying out the exercise to its logical end. Admittedly the exercise, even if carried out in fits and starts, will not change the outlook and effectiveness of organizational leadership over-night. But it would definitely introduce a new set of terms of exchange within the party. Sooner or later, the principle of 'one man, one post' will get extended to the prime minister too.

If the political system is to regain its liberal temper and tolerant tone, then a beginning will have to be made in the largest political formation in the country. It goes without saying that a democratic Congress will also be able to restore to reasonable and desirable health the federal spirit of our centre-state equations. Unless this task is attended to, our best collective wisdom may not be enough to cope with the kind of pressures the other nation-states are

already experiencing and that we are bound to experience.

The sooner the Congress can come out of the mind-set imposed upon it by dynastic authoritarianism, the easier it will be to restore elements of accountability in the country. Once the exercise of power is accountable, it will invariably become purposeful. Also the balance between the organizational and ministerial wings will have to be restored just as the cabinet system will have to be revived. The absence of dynasty therefore should enable the Congress and the polity to repair the frayed credibility of the political system.

Unce the authority in the Congress is set on a non-dynastic principle, it should be easier for the party to become mindful of the aspirations of the newer groups demanding a place at the High Table. It should be able to signal once again that it is not insensitive to newer forces and newer groups and that they can have a reasonable chance of attracting its attention and respect. This will inevitably make the Congressmen useful mediators in the developmental process, explaining the government policies and initiatives and conveying to the administration the grass-roots requirements and needs.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of a post-dynasty Congress will be that it would be in a position to slow down the process of emergence of confrontationist parties groups on a pan-India basis. Once the opposition formations realize that they will have a fair chance of influencing the kindred souls within the Congress (just as the socialists, communists and communalists felt throughout the 1950s and the 1960s), the Congress itself will be inclined to be tolerant towards those who choose to be its antagonists. In fact, the total subordination of the Congress organizational interests to the well-being of the Nehru-Gandhi family had introduced a desperate perception that an individual was the only obstacle to the realization of a sub-group's aspirations. This alone may be the biggest gain that may accrue to the Congress and the Indian polity from the withering away of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty.

# On a communal precipice

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER

SINCE the turn of the last decade. communalism has been on the rise again. Although the problem has been with us since the 19th century, ultimately dividing our country in 1947, it acquired disastrous proportions since 1980, which I consider to be a watershed in Indian politics. Before we discuss this problem, we have to keep one thing in mind: political democracy is an ideal we have been aspiring towards but are very far from achieving. Our democracy, as it operates today, is highly manipulable by various vested interests—economic, political as well as social. And it is this manipulation by vested interests that gives rise to many complex problems, the communal being one among them.

The division of our country did not take place because of either Islam or Hinduism. Partition took place because the power and economic elites of the two communities could not reach an acceptable compromise. Had a power-sharing compromise been worked out between them, we would have been saved the nightmarish experience of partition. Religion was invoked to lend legitimacy to the fight for secular interests. The common people were made to believe that Hinduism and Islam were non-compatible and that the Hindus and Muslims could not co-exist, a thesis very difficult to substantiate through Islamic or Hindu scriptures.

Indian democracy passed through its worst crisis since independence during and after the period of Emergency. The Congress was devastated at the hustings after the Emergency in 1977, and the Janata Party came to power. However, the latter failed due to its own irreconcilable differences, and Indira Gandhi staged a comeback in 1980. But her sense of insecurity persisted and her electoral arithmetic underwent a basic change. She used to win elections on Muslim and Harijan support on the one hand, and that of Brahmins on the other. But after 1980 she became unsure

of Muslim and Harijan support and hence began to woo the middle-caste Hindu who had, as it were, economically arrived and was looking for opportunities and ways to gain power.

Hindu communalism thus acquired a new dimension thanks to Indira Gandhi's political requirements. The Meenakshipuram conversions gave her a unique opportunity to play upon the developing sense of insecurity' among the upper-caste Hindus. She covertly supported the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, which had come on to the political scene just then and whose main objective in that phase was the reconversion of Hindus who had previously converted to Islam. The RSS had trained selected cadre to carry out its politico-cultural objectives but the VHP launched massive programmes among the Hindu masses. And in the early 1980s, it held the Virat Hindu Sammelan in Delhi to launch its most ambitious campaign. This was the beginning of a new aggressive phase of Hindu communalism in the post-partition period.

L his background is necessary to understand what happened on the communal front during 1990-91. Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984 led to other, newer crises, putting Indian democracy under increasing pressure. Rajiv Gandhi opened his innings with the massacre of Sikhs in Delhi and other parts of northern India. He remained a helpless spectator and a prisoner of the highly complex situation then prevailing in the country. I must assert here that neither Indira Gandhi nor Rajiv Gandhi were communal in outlook. While Indira Gandhi used Hindu communalism to her political advantage, Rajiv Gandhi, who was a political novice and innocent of its intricacies, became a prisoner of the situation created by his mother. Also, he selected advisers who were equally raw in politics, spurning the advice of mature and experienced political leaders like Kamalapati Tripathi and others.

The VHP, the RSS and the BIP, all members of one family known as the Sangh Parivar, exploited this situation to the hilt and competed with the Congress(I) in wooing

Hindu votes. What the Congress did in a subtle and highly cautious manner, the VHP and other members of the Sangh Parivar did openly and aggressively. They recognized no restraints. Then came the Shah Bano movement through which the Muslims tried to 'protect' their religious identity.

📕 he Shah Bano movement was also essentially a misuse of religion for political ends by some unscrupulous Muslim leaders. Even if these leaders were not unscrupulous, they either did not anticipate or grossly miscalculated the adverse impact the movement would have on the average Hindu mind. In the end, the Shah Bano movement only served to lend Hindu communalism with a sense of legitimacy. As the Muslim fundamentalists compelled the Rajiv government to change the law on maintenance for Muslims. the Hindu communalists extracted their own price and the government gave in to their pressure to open the locks of the Babri Masjid mosque. What actually took place was not merely the unlocking of the mosque, but the unlocking of the doors of a communal hell in the country.

The Ramjanambhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy has totally communalized our polity. It even exceeds degree of communalization witnessed before partition. The Sangh Parivar, politically represented by the BIP, was now determined to use this controversy to its electoral advantage. It had learnt its technique from the Congress and other centrist parties like the Janata Dal. Both the Congress and the Janata Dal used Muslims and dalits as vote banks, though it cannot be denied that the Janata Dal led by V P Singh did try to take up some genuine Muslim grievances.

However, it also cannot be denied that the Janata Dal, particularly V P Singh, tried to woo the so-called Shahi Imam in the belief that Indian Muslims vote on his directive. This pandering to the whims of the Imam lent further credibility to the VHP-BJP propaganda that the Muslims are 'united' behind one leader and vote as a community while the Hindus are divided and thus politically weak. The diversity

of views among the Hindus might speak of their religious toleration and might even constitute their strength, but it also brought about division and hence became, in political terms, their 'weakness'.

The Sangh Parivar thus made a concerted attempt to bring about unity among the Hindus and turn them into a vote bank as the Congress and the Janata Dal had done with Muslims. However, the caste divisions among the Hindus proved most frustrating and no sense of unity could be forged without at least creating an illusion of transcending caste barriers. And the symbol of Ram, a highly venerated religious figure particularly in the cow belt, proved to be no less than a political boon for this purpose. Since dalits as well as backwards, middle-caste Hindus as well as upper-caste Hindus, all venerated Ram in the northern, central and western regions of India, this was a veritable golden goose in terms of political gain.

However, the illusion of transcending caste barriers was soon shattered by V P Singh when he announced the implementation of the most maligned Mandal Commission Report. It once again brought about a sharp polarization in the casteridden Hindu society. The backwards and dalits were attracted towards the Janata Dal led by their new-found messiah V P Singh. The BJP could not watch silently when a chunk of backward and dalit votes, in addition to the Muslim votes, began piling up in the political basket of the Janata Dal. L K Advani, the then president of the BJP, announced a Rath Yatra to win over the hearts of all Hindus and to strengthen the unity and integrity of India which, according to him, is synonymous with the unity and integrity of the Hindus. It is another matter altogether if his rath, mounted on a Japanese Toyota truck, had to roll through rivers of blood of innocent Indian citizens. After all, a few hundred Muslim lives and a few Hindu lives were hardly any price to pay for the achievement of Hindu unity.

The Ramjanambhoomi issue came in quite handy during the Novem-

ber 1989 election as well. Apart from electoral adjustments with the Janata Dal and other regional parties, it won the BJP an impressive 80 seats in the 9th Lok Sabha election, a windfall beyond the wildest dreams of the leaders of the Parivar. But the May 1991 elections were fought in somewhat different circumstances. And the 1991 Lok Sabha elections were the most major event of that year. In this election the BJP had to fight at the hustings on its own. Unlike in 1989, it was totally isolated this time, having been unable to forge an alliance with any other party but the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra—another communal outfit. It therefore felt compelled not only to equal its performance during the 1989 elections, but to set its goal still higher: achieve its long time dream of becoming the ruling party of the land of Hindus. It desperately needed more and more communal riots in those areas which were so far considered safe in order to win over the Hindu vote there. It therefore decided to put more heat into the Ramjanambhoomi issue.

A hanks to the efforts of the Parivar, the year 1991 had the dubious distinction of starting communal violence in places like Saharanpur, Cuttack etcetera, which, by and large, were free from communal animosity until then. Saharanpur had the unique distinction of remaining free of communal violence ever since the partition. It had witnessed no violence even during those days of utter communal madness. The BJP was determined to snatch that seat from the Janata Dal and to do this it was necessary to create a sharp polarization among the Hindus and the Muslims of Saharanpur, known for their harmonious co-existence for centuries. Saharanpur was the bastion of nationalist Muslims. It was in this district that the internationally known Islamic theological seminary of Deoband of Jami'at al-'Ulama, unflinchingly stood by the Indian National Congress and vociferously opposed the creation of Pakistan. No wonder then that Saharanpur remained peaceful even during the worst days of communal rioting during the 1980s in nearby regions. It never lost its communal poise.

However, to put the Saharanpur Lok Sabha as well as Assembly seats into its political bag, the влр disturbed this poise and in the last week of March 1991, Saharanpur was rocked with violence. This riot succeeded in bringing about what the BIP desired—a sharp polarization between the Hindus and Muslims. There are very few sane elements in Saharanpur now who value communal harmony and peace. The loss of innocent lives is one and only one aspect of communal rioting. The more harmful aspect from the long-term perspective is the permanent rift created between the two communities, weakening the forces of secularism and integration. Saharanpur will never be the same again.

Communal violence continued in different places in India during the, 10th Lok Sabha election campaign right from March to June-July 1991, that is, until a little after the elections. Like Saharanpur, Bhadrak, town in Orissa had also maintained its sanity and communal cool. It, too, lost its poise on 24 March 1991 when the Ramnavmi procession was taken out through its streets. It is very sad that now almost all religious processions have been turned into primarily political processions. They are religious in name only. Little wonder then that the Ramnavmi procession in Bhadrak resulted in widespread communal violence.

L he other places which fell victim to communal violence were Kanpur, Sikandrabad and Varanasi in UP. These were major communal flareups in which several lives were lost. The BJP may or may not have been directly involved in these riots, but that is not important. What is material is that the atmosphere of hatred created in the name of Ram who is thought to be a maryada purush, a paragon of virtues, a model of justice. As pointed out earlier, the BIP was determined to make a serious bid for power in some states as well as at the centre. For this purpose it had to use all the arms in its political armoury. And it was not shy of using any of them, whatever the cost in terms of loss of lives or unity and integrity of the country.

Audio and video cassettes in thousands were produced and made available in different parts of India for inciting communal hatred against minorities, particularly the Muslims. Uma Bharati and Sadhvi Rithambara undertook a whirlwind tour of the country in a desperate bid to unite the Hindus by injecting the fear of the 'other' in their minds. It is a simple rule of human society that to keep one's own flock united one must inculcate a fear of the external enemy and if the external enemy does not exist, then one must create it. Jinnah created a fear of Hindus to achieve the political unity of Muslims. The BJP, 44 years after partition, has tried to create a fear of Muslims to unite the Hindus and pushed the country on to the precipice of another division.

L can say, unhesitatingly, that during no other election since partition was such a vicious communal campaign conducted by any party. Though the BJP was supposedly a Gandhian socialist avatara of the earlier, more narrowly communal Jan Sangh, in its new political reincarnation it beat all records of spreading communal hatred which were set by the Jan Sangh even under the leadership of Balraj Madhok, the most zealous political Hindu. The BIP will probably find it very difficult to beat its own record of communalizing the polity which it set during the 1991 election campaign. And this is no exaggeration: I have come to this conclusion after a great deal of thought and as a student of communal politics in India for the last 30 years.

India reached a critical limit in communalism during the 1991 general elections. But it is to the credit of the Indian people as also of Indian democracy that even after such a viciously communal campaign, the BIP could not capture power at the centre though it did multiply the number of its seats in the Lok Sabha. This, however, must be poor consolation for the leaders of the BJP and other members of the Sangh Parivar. As I have already said, it would hardly be possible for the BIP to break its own record of communalizing the polity beyond this critical limit.

# What is democracy?

RAJEEV BHARGAVA

MUCH has been written in the last decade on the stresses and strains of Indian democracy. A veritable list of social, political and economic factors has been carefully prepared by scholars rendering the crisis both real and intelligible. For some the democratic system in developing societies thwarts capitalist growth and industrialization; hence the need for intensified economic development has a debilitating effect on democracy. For others, the politicization of the OBCs and the middle peasants, the result precisely of the opportunity made available to them by our democratic system, has led to greater demands on the state and ironically to deepening political instability and institutional decay. For still others, more than anything else, the myopic refusal of political leaders such as Indira Gandhi to accept any institutional constraints on power has undermined democratic values and led to a culture of personal rule and centralization.

In the last year or so, however, a new and altogether different argument appears to have gained wider acceptability. Whatever the other causes of the maladies of our democratic polity, one major reason for its weakness, it is argued, has been the cunning deployment by almost all major political parties of the policy of minority appeasement. Such appeasement necessitates the neglect of the interests of the majority. This, it is claimed, is singularly undemocratic. The reasoning here is fairly straightforward. Democracy is integrally tied

to majoritarianism. Therefore, a decision that fails to reflect the will of the majority must be undemocratic. After all, what is democracy if not the rule of the majority?

Appeasement, incidentally, is not such a bad thing. It may even be quite desirable. To pacify someone in anger or pain, to relieve genuine anxieties, to allay rational or irra-tional fears is a fairly honourable thing to do. The art of appeasement is often learnt with age and accompanies the patient acquisition of wisdom. At least in some contexts it is a sign of mature, humane conduct, or a shade worse, the inventive ploy of a resourceful politician. But accusations of minority appearement seem to flow from feelings that for too long we have condoned the misdeeds of persons, rather like giving in to children who persistently throw tantrums. To appease in this context means to spoil, and this, so the argument goes, must be stopped before it is too late; now, enough is enough.

To be sure, appeasement in this second, derogatory sense, is let loose in our society from time to time. The election season breeds appeasement. To enjoy the spoils of the system, parties do not mind spoiling the voter; not just the individual voter, but entire groups are pampered. People can go hang themselves when politicians are firmly entrenched in power, but when the election commission rules, they need to be humoured, mollycoddled, placated. The majority of the poor experience this unique

over-indulgence. So do some sections of religious minorities.

This kind of appeasement is a feature of our imperfect democracy. When nothing happens most of the time, something must be made to happen at the time of elections and the entire village must know about it. Benefits must gain visibility, be over-advertized. Appeasement is part then of a general electoral strategy. There is nothing special about the appeasement of particular religious groups. It is an accompanying malaise of a young and faltering democracy. This kind of appeasement must be checked, but I am afraid it will cease only when we mend our undemocratic ways, refine our methods of participation.

Oo the persistent appeasement of groups is not quite the same thing as their occasional appearement during elections. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe that this second kind of occasional appeasement has ever harmed the interests of any kind of majority community. Let us accept for argument, however, that sometimes it has. Is this undemocratic? It is claimed by some that this must be so. For how can a system allow the interests of the majority to be harmed and remain democratic? The fairly simple reason for this is already mentioned above: democracy means majority-rule.

This conception of democracy is widely held and common enough among political groups. Through a spate of studiously designed newspaper advertisements in the last two years, the BJP has made this view of democracy the very linchpin of its ideological strategy, but it is probably held across the entire political spectrum. Indeed, it may be the dominant conception of democracy in our society. A teenager, fresh from his civics class, may well confirm that this idea of democracy is not only plausible but obviously true.

However, it is only one of the many possible conceptions of democracy and more importantly, there is a sense in which it is palpably false: when overworked or carried too far, it thwarts the very point of democracy. In what fo llows I shall try to show why this is so.

To begin with, let us dispel the idea that democracy is the rule of the mob. By the 'mob', I mean any large collection of people that has suddenly, temporarily and rather promiscuously come together for a loosely defined, more or less passing purpose. A decision taken by such a collectivity, unconstrained by any previous norms, altogether outside the bounds of any institutional framework, is not democratic.

It is not uncommon to find people harbouring the impression that if a large number of people in a democratic system want something now. then they must have it. For example, it is believed by some wellmeaning 'democrats' that if a substantial section of the Kashmiri population is out on the streets for immediate secession today, then the democrat has no option but to give in. Similarly the obstreperous, selfappointed representatives of Hindus have no doubt that if a majority of people currently want to demolish or relocate a mosque then it would be undemocratic not to implement their decision. This kind of thinking, I am afraid, involves an outlandish and rather costly conceptual error of lumping together democracy and mobocracy, of hopelessly failing to realize that democracy works only within normative constraints and is not just any type of rule by any kind of people.

L his error is made not just by those who extol current opinion but even by those who loathe it. Social and political thinkers, with reasonable insight into human nature and in good wisdom, have feared the unhappy outcome of implementing the current whims of people who have neither time nor inclination, nor indeed ability to think through the nature and consequences of their fickle actions. But they have quite wrongly identified democracy with a political rule grounded on such ephemeral and ever-wavering fancies. Democracy is not mobocracy.

In a mobocracy all opinions that are expressed must be implemented. In a democracy, however, all current opinions must be expressed but not necessarily implemented. Only those wishes that are properly evaluated

by discussion and dialogue need to be fulfilled. It is undemocratic both to prevent the expression of all shades of opinions and to mindlessly implement any one of them, even one that currently enjoys mob-support.

In this day and age it is unfashionable to place some above many but I am quite certain that the tyranny of the unenlightened mob is worse than the rule of the enlightened few and not better or worse than the tyranny of a handful of the unenlightened. A hundered bad fellows do not make a decent gentleman. Put together, they make a bunch of thugs. Whims are whims and whatever the number of heads from where they sprout, in the long run, they spell disaster.

Mobocracy is the rule of the whims and fancies of a large number of people, possibly the majority. In quality and outcome, it is no better than a dictatorship. The whole point of democracy, on the other hand, is to ensure a political rule guided by the enduring interests of the largest number of people, interests with which, on some careful thinking, they identify. Mobrule is thoughtless, with not an inkling of the idea of enduring interests; which is why it shares so little with democracy.

What then of the claim that democracy is majority rule, not in the sense that it is the rule of the current opinions of the mob but in the other sense that it involves a set of procedures within an institutional set-up that implement the preferences or interests not of the minority but the majority?

Here a point, often obscured or deliberately glossed over in recent discussions of democracy, needs illuminating. Democracy must keep open the possibility of the continuous restructuring of the ruling group in majority. A person in the minority today must have a reasonable hope of being in the majority tomorrow. Likewise, the group currently in the majority must be aware that in future it may sit on the back-benches lie on the fringe. In short, a society where a group is permanently entrenched as the politically relevant majority cannot be

a democracy. For quite simply, there exists no permanent majority within a democracy.

For example, a society in which the preferences of males alone count in decision-making is not a democracy even if it has more males than females. This, for the rather tame reason that women, no matter what they do, cannot realistically hope to intentionally outnumber men. Much the same is true of a society dominated by a particular race. No matter how groups are formed and transformed, there is little Blacks can do to constitute themselves into the politically relevant majority in the US. This is why if decisions in the US reflect only White preferences on the plea that Whites are in the majority, then the US is not a democracy. Of course, any group in majority is bound to share any number of features. One of these may be its sex or race. The point is that in a democracy these must not be relevant in determining the choice of rulers or the selection of policies.

IV Luch the same is true of factors like caste or religion. These can be relevant in a democracy to the formation of the ruling group if individuals have a realistic hope of moving from one religion or caste to another. If religion could be easily shed or swapped freely then the rule of a religious group may be compatible with democracy. Since this is not possible for most of us much of the time, the majoritarian rule of a religious or caste group cannot be democratic. Democracy is not the rule of just any majority. If the politically relevant majority in a society is naturally or more or less permanently constituted, then that society has forfeited its claims to being democratic.

It is not infrequently heard these days that if democracy is the rule of the majority, then the unquestionable majority of the Hindus implies that their preferences must count more than those of others. It is abundantly clear that this argument is deeply mistaken. Consider one of its implications. If we accept that Hindus are in a majority and that their preferences must always count more than those of others,

then what point exists at all in having any democratic procedures, of dialogue and discussions, indeed even of holding elections? All decisions in such a society are permanently skewed in favour of one group and possibly against all others. If this were to happen, elections and democratic procedures would be entirely pointless for minority groups. Indeed, since the outcome in this case is already determined in advance and the majority knows it, democratic procedures would have no meaning even for the group in majority.

The majority group is always the winner. Its preferences will forever matter more than those of others. The preferences of others will count only if Hindus decide they should. This is to say that they matter only if the external preferences of Hindus coincide with the internal preferences of minority religious groups. Unless Hindus generously allow Muslims and Sikhs to realize their objectives, they cannot reasonably hope to ever get what they want. This is not democracy but its most perfect negation. It is a moot conceptual point that talk of Hindu, Muslim or Sikh majority is undemocratic unless religion becomes a matter of individual choice. In brief, democracy is incompatible with the rule of a permanently constituted religious majority.

So is democracy a set of procedures that enables decisions to reflect the well-thought-out, sustainable interests of whoever happens to be in the majority? I am afraid not. To be sure, 'counting heads is better than breaking them'. Quite simply, this kind of majoritarian democracy is better than any kind of tyranny, far superior to mobocracy, oligarchy or dictatorship. Still, it is not an ideal way to govern. It is rather skimpy when compared to a form of government where majority preferences are met only after a minimal political programme granting human dignity to all is guaranteed. Democracy properly exists when the particular interests of the majority are fulfilled only if they are generally compatible with the basic interests of all citizens. Let me explain this point in greater detail.

Democracy is all about equality and freedom. The core of the democratic ideal is the belief that every person within the community is equally entitled to a life of dignity and self-respect. From this three things follow. First, all must be able to pursue their interests, realize their plans. Secondly, they must play a key role in their realization. It is not enough that decisions serve the interests of individuals. They must also be taken by her/him. Thirdly, it is essential that no individual or group has an excess of power over other individuals or groups. The reason is obvious. Unequal power thwarts the realization of interests, restricts autonomy, and undermines self-respect.

hese democratic principles are realized at two distinct levels and correspondingly involve two kinds of interests. On the collective plane, they implicate the idea of common interests-interests that are shared by all citizens regardless of their sex, race caste, creed or religion. Such interests include, for example, the opportunity to work and earn a living, the presence of an atmosphere where conflicts are resolved by dialogue and discussion rather than force and violence, the due process of law, the existence of a bill of rights, the protection of a culture without which no one can acquire a sense of his/her identity. The entire community must draw a minimum programme based on such common interests, decide the basic framework that assures each citizen a life of dignity and self-respect.

If this basic plan for the community is drawn without the participation of some groups or individuals, is skewed in favour of some groups by empowering them over others, or reflects the particular interests of any group or individual rather than those of all citizens, then it fails to properly fulfil democratic aspirations.

On the individual or group level, a democratic polity is expected to encourage the satisfaction of the particular interests of all individuals and groups. It must guarantee a distribution of common resources in a way that such particular interests have an equal chance of realization. By particular interests I mean inte-

rests of an individual or a group that could not be shared by all citizens within a community. For example, at least some interests of an academic are different from those of a painter. The interests of a businessman are often opposed to the needs of a worker. Some objectives of a particular religious community may be incompatible with those of another. Here, democratic norms are flouted when some groups or individuals fail to possess the requisite resources to achieve their particular goals, or their particular interests remain unsatisfied largely because of persistent interference from others.

L he important point to remember about democracy, however, is that it allows the pursuit of particular interests only as long as they are consistent with common interests. This is not because democratic people are committed to some supraindividual collective goal but because the proper sustenance of this common framework is predicated on the effective realization of the particular interests of all citizens. A democratic polity is based on the assumption that all be treated equally and on the idea that interests common to all citizens, to the majority as well as the minorities, are of more significance than the current preferences of any particular group, especially when they are incompatible with the common interests of я11.

Polities employing majoritarian procedures to settle policy matters have only partially realized democratic values. To be fully democratic, they must ensure that enduring interests shared by all citizens remain outside the arena of majoritarian decision-making. This is much of the reason why constitutions are framed at all. Moreover, if by some chance, common issues of funda-mental importance are inducted into the majoritarian political agenda, then a democracy must guarantee that every citizen possesses the power to veto decisions that endanger common interests.

This point is overlooked by majoritarians because they fail to note the key distinction between particular and common interests. Indeed

no room exists within their framework for the very idea of common interest. For majoritarians, democracy is a game between groups with particular interests in which the winner, purely on the strength of numerical majority, takes all. But they do not reckon that the very possibility of such a game rests on the prior acceptance of a shared framework. The free play of particular interests presupposes the existence of common interests. These common interests must at all costs be protected, even when they come into conflict with the particular interests of the majority. It follows that democracy does not imply that the current preferences of the majority is to be imposed on all citizens. Democracy does not mean majority

Democracy means neither the rule of the majority nor of a minority, but primarily the acceptance of a common framework that prevents the concentration of power in either. Since democracy is a central value of our Constitution and majoritarian rule is inimical to proper democratic functioning, equating democracy with majoritarian rule is neither fully democratic nor properly constitutional.

L his year we have witnessed an ideological assault on our already weakened democratic structures. Consciously or unconsciously, with a mixture of good and bad intentions, a vigorous attempt has been launched to first emasculate and then permanently fix the very meaning of the term 'democracy'. This is a dangerous trend. It is impor-tant that the whims of the mob or the current, particular interests of the majority do not masquerade as the common interests of all citizens. It is equally important that the common interests of all citizens are not construed as the particular interests of a minority. The defence of genuinely common interests is the primary duty of a democrat. To fulfil this duty is not to work against the majority in favour of a particular minority. To mindlessly brand all democratic people as pro-minority may well be the ideological ploy of those who pay lip service to a democratic constitution that they relentlessly undermine.

### Year of the U-turn

T. N. NINAN

RARELY is it possible to describe a whole year with one phrase, unless it relates to a war, or an Emergency. So, if 1991 can quite simply be described as the Year of the U-turn, it shows how special the year was. It was the year in which the country did a U-turn away from Nehruvian socialism: when it chose to give up import substitution for international competitiveness; when it decided that capital had to be nurtured more carefully than labour; that foreign investment was better than foreign borrowing; that small government was better than big government; that there was no such thing as a free lunch.

There were plenty of other Uturns too, of course. Many a leftist unconsciously found himself arguing that India should actually have gone to the International Monetary Fund a year or two earlier. Secretaries to the Government of India were actually heard stating, in the presence of more than four witnesses, that nothing would happen if their own departments were wound up for good. And at least at one closeddoor trade unionists' conclave, the view was widely shared that they could not go on as they had done in the past.

The U-turns were found in still other places. Privatization finally became official policy, and the commanding heights be damned (indeed, most of them were already damned because of non-performance). Also, the year began with foreign exchange reserves plummeting to virtually unprecedented lows, to as little as Rs. 2,500 crore. In the closing

weeks of the year, however, the reserves were climbing strongly and had topped Rs. 8,000 crore. In the April-June quarter, non-resident Indians pulled out nearly a billion dollars (less than Rs 2,000 crore then). In the last quarter of the year, the NRIs were beating a path back to the Indian door.

That was not the end of the list. IBM had done a U-turn and returned to India, with nary a word of protest from anyone. And if IBM was here, could Coke be far behind? And why should anyone protest? Wasn't Pepsi already here? And weren't Hewlett Packard, Sun Microsystems, Digital, and everybody else here too?

To cut a long story short, 1991 was the year in which the economy changed direction. And most of the U-turning was concentrated in two astonishing months that will go down as a watershed period like no other in Indian economic history: July and August 1991.

Those were the months when the rupee was devalued in two swift moves. When the trade policy was radically rewritten. When industrial policy liberalization acquired real meaning. When the government quietly decided to cage the MRTP and FERA tigers. When Indian fiscal policy went sharply into the most impressive U-turn of them all: a slashing of subsidies, the promise of a radical shift from customs tariffs to excise duties, the threat that losing public sector companies would not be bailed out by doling out budgetary resources.

Perhaps the one animal that refused to do a U-turn was the stubborn stock market bull. The year began with a stock market surge that had most people watching in disbelief. And the year ended with the market still riding high, despite the inflation, despite the prospect of a stiff 1992 budget, despite the industrial recession and the export slump, despite all the bad news. In heaven's name, why? Well, perhaps the market knew a thing or two that everyone else didn't. That low industrial growth (or a recession) need not mean lower profits: the first half of the year actually saw companies sharply increasing profits and pro-fitability. And that if one looked beyond the immediate problems of transition, the new economic policies were good for industry and for business.

Prices didn't do a U-turn either. of course. Despite the finance minister's brave promises, the seasonal downswing from September never really materialized. And that was despite a dramatic U-turn in monetary policy: after years of profligate printing of currency notes, you suddenly had a tight money policy that was implemented with such vengeance that many banks simply stopped all (that is all) lending activity. As a result, interest rates not only crossed the 20% psychological barrier but even soared to 30% and beyond.

The question, of course, is whether the U-turns will take the country up the rocky road to prosperity. Any immediate answers may have more to do with ideological faith than firm forecasting. But this much is clear: the road ahead is a rocky one.

Consider the fact that this year's budgetary target of bringing down the fiscal deficit to 6.5% of GDP, from 8.4% last year, is proving difficult to achieve. Customs receipts have suffered because of the import compression, and fresh taxation measures may well be announced in January, because the IMF is not going to listen to any excuses.

But that is only the first hump that has to be crossed. Immediately afterwards, there is the equally daunting task of reducing the fiscal deficit for next year to no more than 5% of GDP, again as required by the IMF. The task is even more difficult than would have been the case ordinarily because, simultaneously, the customs tariffs have to be reduced in order to open the economy to more international competition, and to bring India's customs rates (at an average of 70%, now the highest in the world) more in line with the normal international level of about 30%. That could mean a further slashing of defence spending, a fresh round of fertilizer price increases, a slashing of the food subsidy, and of course fresh taxes. If the last budget was a difficult task, it is going to look like a cakewalk in comparison with the next

Most countries that embark on such macro-economic adjustment programmes rely on liberalized imports (and therefore a greater volume of imports) to protect customs revenue at a time when they are cutting customs tariffs. In India's case, unfortunately, the country's foreign reserves are not yet at a level where the import regime can be liberalized to the degree required to protect government revenue despite a lowering of tariff walls. The late surge in foreign exchange reserves in 1991 may of course still make this possible, but one line of argument is that the Indian adjustment programme is under-funded by the multilateral funding institu-

More rocks appear on the road in terms of the special interest groups that will have to be taken on if adjustment is to proceed. So far, the government has only pinched the farmer's pocket with the fertilizer price increase in July/August, and protest was strong enough to force the government to do a partial retreat. In the coming weeks and months, however, the urban consumer will feel the pinch when the food subsidy is slashed. The organized working class has to be taken on when the exit policy is framed. And the government will have to run the gauntlet of the public sector workers when privati-

zation gathers momentum, and when losing public sector concerns are told that the government has no money to bail them out through budgetary transfers.

Finally, of course, the farmers will have to be taxed still further, when fertilizer prices are raised yet again in order to contain the subsidy bill. Farmers, urban consumers and organized workers: those are the strongest pressure groups in the country and account for the bulk of the population. In short, when the adjustment programme begins to bite, will the country understand or will protest spill over onto the streets?

So far at least, the government has moved adroitly in order to prevent widespread protest. It adopted a flexible stand when raising fertilizer prices in July/August, and the word from the fertilizer industry is that fertilizer offtake has not suffered, and that farmers have adjusted to the new prices. The government is therefore confident of being able to go through with another round of more modest price increases.

On the exit policy, too, the government has moved with extreme caution: resisting IMF pressure for immediate action, insisting that when the policy is formulated it must come down on the side of the workers, garnering over Rs. 1,000 crore from the World Bank for a national renewal fund that will be nothing more than a thinly disguised dole for those who are to be retrenched, and seeking broadbased support by asking for a parliamentary debate on the subject.

Critical to being able to climb up the road is also the need to ensure that the opposition does not throw more rocks in the government's way. So far at least, virtually every major political party has played along with the government, perhaps because they too realize that things cannot go on as they have been, perhaps because no one really wants another election just yet, and perhaps because they would rather have the Congress (I) take the tough decisions. But the BJP is girding up for yatra battle again, and the traditional post-election quietus could

give way to heightened opposition activity in the coming months. A minority government would be vulnerable to pressure when this happens.

he fact of the matter also is that the government's calculations about economic performance this year have gone awry. When the budget was prepared in July, the expectation was that growth in 1991-92 would be 4.5%. That has been reduced since to 3%. Inflation, it was said, would stay at single-digit level but is still running at 14%. Exports continue to be sluggish, and may take time to recover because of the squeeze on export-related imports, the recession in some Western markets, and the collapse of the Soviet market. And money will remain as tight as it has been, till April at least. So far the people have been keeping their heads down and braving the chill winds of an economic winter. But never forget that high rates of inflation, low growth and high unemployment could make for a Molotov cocktail.

The overall economic scenario is not, of course, as grim as it has been in many debt-ridden countries that embarked on adjustment programmes. After all, large parts of Africa and South America saw no growth at all in the 1980s, and a decline in per capita incomes. India so far is distinctly better off than that. No matter how slowly, the economy is still growing. And the planners insist that the 1992-97 eighth five year plan will achieve 5.6% growth annually without too many problems.

What about business itself? The news is grim in some sectors of industry (notably automobiles and consumer durables), and those dependent on government orders will find that the orders are scarce. Fresh investment is likely to suffer because of the financial squeeze and soaring interest rates, and because of higher investment costs in the wake of two years of double-digit, inflation. Indeed, as one businessman argued, something must be wrong with policy when there is no money available in the system for normal working capital, but plenty available on the stock market for speculation. Has financial disintermediation gone awry?

On the flip side, everyone is now looking seriously at export markets. It has long been the (valid) charge that virtually every large corporation in the country uses more foreign exchange than it earns. Not for much longer, it would seem. The largest companies in the country, including Hindustan Lever, ITC, Tata Iron and Steel and several others, are now focusing on exports as they have never done before. MRF alone talks of exporting Rs. 500 crore worth of tyres in the not too distant future, following its tie-up with Michelin. If you are looking for U-turns, here is another one.

Such ups and downs are of course predictable when travelling the adjustment road. The big danger is of falling off the edge of the precipice. But so far at least, there is nothing to warrant the fear that that is about to happen. And if one looks at the big South American economies that have travelled the adjustment road before India, the picture is even one of hope: growth has returned, the debt has been whittled down, the capital flight has been reversed, government budgets are in better balance, and trade is on even keel. The people may feel poorer, but adjustment has been achieved. The challenge before the Indian economy is less daunting than those the South Americans have encountered, and three years down the road perhaps the picture here too will be one of a difficult task successfully handled.

At the end of the day (or year), however, the most significant U-turn is in economic dogma. The shibboleths that dominated political-economic thought from the days of the freedom struggle onwards have finally been discarded. Consider, for instance, that the same industrial policy which VP Singh's government announced and then failed to implement in 1990, went through in 1991 without a word of serious protest. Something fundamental has changed in the way the economy sees itself. For that reason, it nothing else, the new policy direction that has been adopted after the Uturn of 1991, will stay.

## Mollusc without a shell

BHARAT KARNAD

THE TIMES, London, publishes a much-thumbed reference book. Called The Times Survey of Foreign Ministries of the World, it unblushingly describes itself as an 'authoritative' account of the 'histories and present make-up of the world's leading foreign ministries....' Such apparent international power houses as the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Ireland, and Turkey take up space. Some 35 pages, moreover, are devoted to China (a length of attention only matched by that accorded Whitehall), with an elaborate set of articles on the Chinese Foreign Office during the Ch'ing dynasty, in the period 1912-49, and since the communists took over. India does not figure anywhere, a throwaway proof if one were needed that these

days it does not count for much or even a little on the international stage.

This is sad but hardly surprising. Having quickly discerned the trendy themes in the 1950s of anti-colonialism, anti-racism, and anti-imperialism, it rode these issues to a position of international influence disproportionate to its actual power. But nothing fails like success. Instead of keeping a keen eye out for developments abroad in order to define emerging problems, and so continually to keep in the van of international opinion, Indian foreign policy got stuck in the mire of issues that fetched it initial acclaim. As colonies were liberated, racist regimes reformed themselves, and

empires dissolved, Indian policy gradually lost its vitality, its relevance, and resembled so much sludge left over in a gobar gas plant after all the methane is extracted. India is now a 'me too' country in the external realm, a straggler habituated to bringing up the rear and earning the occasional kick or fistful of crumbs from the leaders of the pack.

Look at the thrillingly unsettled world around us and then consider our pathetic reaction to the astounding changes afoot to realize how much out of the swim we have been rendered by an inelastic and unimaginative foreign policy. Consider the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, where the shrimp have learned to whistlel Either that or the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics have forsaken communism. It is the latter of course, notwithstanding Khrushchev's assertion that the crustacean will sooner purse its lips and blow which, as Lauren Bacall told the character played by Humphrey Bogart, will result in the emission of sound that Nikita was talking about!

This remarkable turn of events has come less than eight years after Chairman Yuri Andropov's statement that the Soviet people were not so naive as to disarm unilaterally. What to speak of disarmament, the unnaive Soviet peoples have gone and unilaterally dismantled the police state at home and in the vicinity allowed neighbouring countries-Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria to overthrow totalitarianism. Germany has been reunited, sending tremors of apprehension. Yugoslavia is coming apart at the seams. Even the arch Marxist enclave on the Adriatic, Albania, has seen fit to execute a 180 degree wheel.

So, pray, how has our Ministry of External Affairs taken to this blitz of revolutionary change? Why, like a fearful dormouse inching into a corner, hoping forlornly for things to revert to the way they were. There has not been a squeak out of the MEA, other than that ridiculous wag of his finger at an embattled Gorbachev by Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao, Indira

Gandhi's foreign minister no less, accompanied by the insulting bromide that changes cannot be realized in a hurry. This botched up, barely concealed, support for the August coup d'etat marked India out as an enemy of freedom and as undeserving of sympathetic consideration by the successor republies. The recent, unprecedented, Soviet-Belorussian-Ukrainian vote in the United Nations General Assembly for the Pakistan-Bangladesh proposal for the South Asian nuclear free zone is only the first blow. Nastier 'surprises' may soon follow.

Look next at West Asia. India, once regarded as indispensable to a final solution, does not merit a mention, even on the margin. A condescending PLO flunky stationed in New Delhi 'welcomed' an Indian role. What it could be, he wisely refrained from saying, for clearly it has none, India's credibility having long ago been sacrificed at the altar of the Arab cause. The MEA spokesman was reduced to mouthing unsolicited prayers for the success of the Madrid Conference and, serves him right, to hear an admonitory sermon from the Israeli Consul-General in Bombay. India, the Israeli official hoped, will, as soon as possible, follow the mainstream of international diplomacy regarding Israel and join so many countries in East Europe. Africa and Asia which in recent years have established, resumed, or improved their relations with Israel'. And to think that India (Member of the 1948 UN Special Commission on Palestine, the 1958 Special UN cell to devise a permanent peace plan for Lebanon, etcetera) was once considered non-partisan enough to be on the forward edge of the international thinking on West Asia.

Now turn your gaze towards that rag-bag of third world nations with governments of the corrupt, by the incompetent, for the wretched known as the Non-Aligned Movement. For the last couple of decades there is not a thing that NAM has done right; the most egregious affront to its integrity being the Havana Declaration, which pronounced the socialist bloc 'natural allies' of the non-aligned. To add

fatally to its problems, its members now refuse to see that, for all intents and purposes, the Movement's prevailing raison d'etre is extinct. At its best, it was no more than a cut-rate talkshop. NAM leaders are seemingly quite happy for it to remain one forever (to wit External Affairs Minister Madhavsinh Solanki's remark that NAM is still 'relevant').

The other slightly more productive yakkity-yak shop (productive because of its technical exchange and educational programmes) is the Commonwealth. Like the NAM, it too has lost its pet peeve. The White racist government in South Africa, without so much as by-yourleave to the moralizing humbugs, has gone and reformed itself, leaving the third world scrambling for issues safely to unite on. But the habit of shifting the onus on to the West dies hard. Prime Minister Rao has listed environment, drug-running, terrorism and poverty as the new and dominant problems requiring global solutions.

Such solutions will only be effective if they are based on genuine international cooperation,' quoth he at the 37th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. 'And international cooperation in today's world demands precisely that we respect pluralities of approaches and solutions.' Ah so! But, why should poverty alleviation be a global concern, not a national one? Because, that will mean that the governments of the poor countries will have to govern more sensibly and will have to be accountable for wrong actions and policies. Whence the escape route ('respect for pluralities of approaches and solutions') neatly mapped out by our PM.

To blame the sheer inadequacies of the Indian foreign policy on Jawaharlal Nehru is at once obvious and half-wrong. At the time he postulated the doctrines of non-alignment, of the less developed Afro-Asian bloc as balancer between the two cold war protagonist—the USA and USSR—the reality on the ground offered possibilities that NAM capitalized on. As an operational concept, the balancer notion had respectable antecedents,

not the least of which was the system founded by Messers Talleyrand (France), Metternich (Austro-Hungarian empire), and Castlereagh (Britain) in post-Napoleonic Europe. It kept the peace from 1815 to around 1848, a long, very long, period of time considering that war in that age was a respectable means of statecraft.

Not surprisingly, its success made its founders the prisoners of its rhetoric. The three great statesmen never wearied of tired old cliches that 'balance of power' became in its last phase. It moved a disgusted Austrian bureaucrat, Friedrich von Gentz, to describe an all too familiar summit as Metternich and Talleyrand holding forth 'in the usual way'. 'The fine sounding nonsense of these two gentlemen,' he confessed, 'enveloped my mind in a fog of unreality.'

A similar 'fog of unreality' attends on the extant Indian foreign policy. But there is a dearth of von Gentzs, conscientious MEA mandarins, prepared to stick their necks out, to point out the unpalatable facts of life to our political masters that much of the Nehruvian thinking is passe and ill-fits a radically changed world, and that for this country to live by antiquated precepts is to court both diplomatic reverses and, worse, ridicule.

The mindlessly inflexible and nearly worthless Indian foreign policy can be attributed, one, to the sticking to Nehru's constructs long after they outlived their utility, and secondly, to the absence of any serious innovative thinking on the part of the MEA. On the evanescent issues (anti-colonialism, anti-racism, etcetera) that a liberal Nehru made his own, the country couldn't far go wrong at a time when great masses of newly independent states emerged unsteadily on the international scene. He gave them an easily identifiable standard to rally around. That was fine for then and in the larger sphere.

Nearer home, in his perception of China as a threat, for instance, he was spectacularly wrong. He died of heartbreak at the Chinese 'stab in the back', but it was the Indian Foreign Office—MEA—that neither recovered its wits nor found its independent bearing. The Indian Foreign Office chose to stay coddled in the certainties of the Nehruvian model and method.

This mental straitjacket was principally due to Nehru playing his own foreign minister. As an 'authority' on everything under the sun, especially international affairs, he institutionalized the practice of the Indian diplomat looking to head-quarters and, specifically, the prime minister for guidance on trivial and matters of larger import alike. (Memoirs of retired IFS officials, like T N Kaul, Appa Pant, Kewal Singh et al., prove this point.)

As long as Nehru was alive the micro-management worked because of his instinct for the big play on the world scene. When he departed, there was no one of equal stature to steer the business and playing it safe by staying the course was substituted for active guidance. An incentive not to question the foundations or the conduct of the Nehru-laid policy was also rooted in the rewards going mainly to those in the Service who toed the line. That a nimblefooted foreign policy fetches enormous dividends may be seen from the record of Chinese diplomacy. A Confucian bent of mind (of a Zhouenlai and Deng Xiaoping) has always animated Beijing, which was able at will to play the ends off against the middle and bring home the pork.

Thus, it trilled panch-shila and bhai-bhai, legitimated itself internationally (at the UN, Bandung, etcetera) and its annexation of Tibet with Nehru's help but didn't think twice of taking a stick to India in the Himalayan War. It supplied arms to both Iran and Iraq during their interminable war in the Khuzistan Desert. More recently, it armed Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Emirates with the Silkworm and other long-range missiles, and at the same time replenished the Iraqi ex-Soviet war stocks, all the time mouthing pieties about the need for peace. It talks responsibly on nuclear non-proliferation, but on the side assists every comer (Iran, Iraq, Algeria, Pakistan and, to believe Western sources, India by shipping to it unsafeguarded Heavy Water) to build the Bomb. It supports the Palestinian cause it says, but does not shy away from establishing close trade and military (technology transfer) relations with Israel.

On the human rights question, instead of being on the defensive (as India has been), the Chinese government published a so-called 'White Paper' asking the Americans to, in effect, stop interfering in China's domestic affairs. Despite its reservations about the reformist government in Moscow, it strengthened its links with it and, at the same time, sent out feelers to the Soviet Islamic republics that can source danger for China in the future. Swallowing its pride, it sued for peace with Vietnam-until recently its bete noire.

Or consider Pakistan, which owing to a clever and extremely agile foreign policy has connived at keeping India off balance and otherwise so preoccupied with what Islamabad is up to, it has shrunk India's importance internationally. Unlike India, Pakistan has not made a fetish of third worldism, has relied on common sense and quick returns on policy. It partook of the 1950s' 'pactomania' (CENTO, SEATO, Baghdad Pact) when it suited its purpose. Islamabad befriended China and facilitated American opening to that country, in the process winning the gratitude of Washington and Beijing. It cashed in on its Muslim identity, developed its West Asian links (exporting labour and armed forces as palace guard for the assorted Gulf royalty), and thus effortlessly trumped India's Arab card comprising equal parts of championing the Palestinian cause and obsequiousness towards the Arabs. This rubbed India out of the West Asian picture.

Islamabad massaged the ego of the Shah Pehlavi who dreamt of recreating a latter-day Persepolis, and once he was exiled, immediately found virtue in the Khomeini-ian mindset and proved its good faith by partnering Israel in covertly arming Iran against Iraq. On Afghanistan it risked the wrath of Moscow by sustaining the mujahideen gue-

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rilla war and won the respect of the Soviets and the admiration of the Americans. And it called in its IOUs, by forcing Washington to turn a Nelson's eye even as it cobbled together, with Chinese help, a nuclear weapons capability. Having done so, it has now espoused at SAARC, UN and other international fora the idea of the South Asian nuclear free zone and deftly slipped the nonproliferation noose round India's neck. Looking at the future Pakistan, along with Iran, has taken the lead in defining common interests with the Soviet Islamic republies, thereby not just securing its northern border but turning the point of the sword on the USSR by threatening an anti-Moscow league in Central Asia. This is inspired foreign policy-making.

Pakistan, as a small country on the make, has exploited to the hilt its limited assets and what opportunities it has been afforded. China has rediscovered its masterly Middle Kingdom-touch of fork-tongued double-dealing policies—the essence of diplomacy, surely. But India is nowhere near acting on the Arthashastra. Chanakya graces our Sunday morning television, when his teachings should be motivating the MEA.

An effective foreign policy is not easy in the most placid of times. There are bound to be ups and downs. But when, for the last 30 years, we have done little but hurtle downwards, it doesn't take a foreign policy Einstein to see that something is drastically wrong with the very first step of our policy-making, namely, correctly perceiving and imaging the world.

Let's see if we can get an unfuzzy snapshot of the international scene as it is (rather than as we'd like it to be). The cold war was the chief feature of the post-1945 era. With the capitulation of the Soviet Union, more than communist dogma has had the rug pulled from under it. Also consigned to the trash bin are collateral themes, like socialism, statism, and the North-South divide. In short, all the props and underpinnings of Indian foreign policy, the milestones New Delhi has paced itself by, are gone. Without any of

these policy constants to cocoon in, India has become, to use Admiral von Tirpitz's description of a Germany sans a navy, 'a mollusc without a shell'.

Forget the sophisticated Chanakya, MEA will have to learn so basic an axiom of foreign policy-making (as the one pithily enunciated by Lord Palmerston) that a country has no permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests. In the event, it will have to jettison the manichaean view of good and bad and India siding with the angels. Less rigid, more creative and productive thinking is called for in an age of flux.

With the death of Marxism-Leninism, the competing Western model of development has become hard to resist. Protest all you want, but the bitter free market medicine will be pushed down third world throats by the Bretton Woods institutions. Hand in hand with the 'Coca-Colanization', the world will be processed, values and moreswise, into standard Americana. This is one way of looking at it.

The other is to see the promise and profit in a situation in which all state actors operate in a homogenized milieu devoid of ideological animus; where every foreign office understands every little nuance in language, gesture and policy of every other foreign office. This will at once make for a more stable and fluid international situation, resembling the Europe of Metternich, Talleyrand and Castlereagh.

The premium will now be on the quicksilver quality of a country's foreign policy. How fast a foreign office thinks on its feet, how quickly it acts on its hunches, and how smoothly it makes and breaks issuebased alliances without giving great offence, will determine a country's room for manocuvre, as also its international standing and reputation. To realize such a sly, silky and substantive foreign policy may be too much to ask of our MEA which, in Talleyrand's phrase, 'have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing'. Then again, isn't it time they discovered what diplomacy is really

## New world order aborted?

BHARAT WARIAVWALLA

STATESMEN shape history; politicians trifle with it. Events which unfolded so suddenly and swiftly in the late 1980s and early 1990s are momentous, for they will decide the future of world politics in the last decade of the 20th century and beyond. These are the crumbling of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 and with it the end of the Soviet empire in East Europe; the victory of the West led by the United States against Iraq in February 1991; and the outbreak of ethnic hostilities in Yugoslavia in June 1991, sparked off by the demands of some ethnic groups for independence. A similar development was later witnessed in the USSR. What do these events mean for the liberal capitalist order, the winner of the cold war, the West? What do they want to construct in place of the cold war?

To put it briefly, the first event signifies the demise of communism; the second one demonstrates the West's resolve to prevent any third world country from challenging the new international order and the third seriously calls into question the long-held assumption that the state is the linch-pin of any order, domestic or international. Can the institution of the state survive in East Europe, the USSR, West Asia, South Asia and Africa? Have these events aborted the American design for a new world order?

Perhaps history does not record a time when such far-reaching events happened in such a short time and in such quick succession as they did between 1989 and 1991. Are there people in power today who can seize and shape these events into an order, or will they, in the process of tinkering with them be ultimately overwhelmed by them? Today I see no shapers but only tinkerers of history.

Let me note here the significance of these events as well as their consequences. Someone has said that the 1989 revolution marks the end of the 'hyper-rational' genre of politics.\* It was born with the French Revolution and it flowered during the terror phase. The ideologies of the French Revolution, drawing upon the Enlightenment philosophy, believed that man was rational, had the capacity for rational choice and for rationally ordering all human interactions. But for modernity to be born tradition had to be first destroyed and that is what the revolution set out to do.

The most zealous of revolutionaries, Maxim Robespierre, fervently believed that with the power of reason, and if need be, the power of the guillotine, an ideal citizen could be created. Now our age has seen many Robespierres, who also attempted to 'rationally' order society to realize man's innate perfectibility. This is what the communist regimes attempted to do at great

<sup>\*</sup>See Gale Stokes, 'Lessons of the East European Revolutions of 1989', Problems of Communism, September-October 1991.

human cost, but failed. The 1989 revolution has buried this hyperrational genre of politics. It was an amazingly peaceful revolution and its sway and speed truly astounding. In six short months, from June to November, the communist regimes of East Europe fell without offering resistance (except in Romania).

Liberal pluralism is now the professed ideology of the East European leaderships as well as of those of some Soviet republics. But between the profession and the realization of an idea there is a vast distance and it is highly doubtful whether these leaderships will be able to traverse it successfully. Nothing as yet is firmly installed in place of communism and this raises some disturbing problems for international stability.

In the event the transition to liberal pluralism causes great economic hardships for the population (familiar problems of changing from a dirigist to market economy) or that the transition brings about ethnic unrest and separatist movements, then there is a distinct possibility of the emergence of jingoist, aggressive, irredentist regimes in East Europe and some Soviet republics. In the aftermath of the First World War these kinds of regimes sprang up all over East Europe. They could suffer the fate of Yugoslavia of today, in case they fail to become a liberal democratic Holland or Sweden.

Russian history shows that Russophiles have, on and off, always commanded power. However history judges Gorbachev, the man in the streets of Moscow will undoubtedly claim that he has never been more poor than under Gorbachev's rule. Besides, he is witness to the chilling spectre of the dissolution of his country. Perhaps he understands that all this was bound to happen once glasnost came in the place of the old enforced unanimity. But like everyone else he wants freedom, albeit freedom in the framework of some semblance of order. And if that is not possible, then he may opt for order under authoritarianism. There is always the possibility of an authoritarian Russophile leadership coming to power in Moscow.

The Western proponents of the new international order hailed the 1989 revolution because they thought that it offered them for the first time since Yalta, the possibility of building a liberal interdependent world knit together by the market. But the immediate consequences of the revolution have been chaos, economic misery and ethnic strife in East Europe and the USSR. East of the Elbe, the future of liberalism is indeed bleak.

The significance of the West's victory against Iraq last February is twofold: the restructuring of relations between the developed and developing countries (north-south, as it was called in the 1970s) decisively in favour of the former; and the determination of the West to deny any strategic autonomy to any developing country.

Daddam's occupation of Kuwait threatened the emerging new world order. President Bush and President Gorbachev said this in the statement they issued at the end of their meeting in Helsinki in September 1990. While the West led by the United States, and with the diplomatic support of the Soviet Union, was preparing itself to defend the new order, Saddam Hussein was making a determined bid to reverse the 'oldorder'. In the numerous statements he made before and after the occupation of Kuwait, he said in his usually menacing tone that the world oil price must be stopped from declining before it ruins his country.

For him the old order was the highly unequal relationship between the oil producers of the South and the oil consumers of the West and this had to be reversed, he told our foreign minister, I K Gujral. By occupying Kuwait and thus acquiring for himself a quarter of the Gulf oil, he thought he could get a better price for the only produce on which his economy depended. It was an outrageous act. But in our outrage, let us not forget that the act was born out of despair at the way the world economy functions.

From the beginning the West, and particularly the United States. was adamant about upholding the principle that the price of oil should be determined by the law of supply and demand. Saddam had to be punished for upsetting this relationship, if necessary by force. By defeating Iraq, the West has clearly driven the message home to all developing countries that the market alone can determine the relations between developed and developing countries. The North-South dialogue has now definitively come to an end. It is the IMF that will now monitor the economic policies of the developing world.

A here was another important objective the West wanted to serve by going to war with Iraq. After the occupation of Kuwait in August 1990, Saddam came to be viewed by the West as an Arab Hitler who, with his chemical (supplied earlier by the Germans) and nuclear weapons presented the greatest threat to humanity. How the Western image of this man changed so suddenly is worth investigating in order to understand the role Western media played in swinging public opinion in favour of the war. Till July 1990 Saddam was still pictured as a common-or-garden third world despot. A month later he was a Hitler, out to set the world on fire to achieve his perverse ends.

Now he is being disarmed. Some influential Americans even suggest that his economy be placed under the supervision of the World Bank and his military establishment under that of the UN. Francis Fukuyama, who made the arrogant assertion that history has come to an end with the end of the cold war, said something equally arrogant after the American victory in the Gulf war: 'From now on, no Ruritanian of the third world shall dare trifle with American interests.'

The outbreak of ethnic hostility in Yugoslavia this summer and later the separation of the Baltic countries and Ukraine from the USSR, mark the appearance of a phenomenon that could wreck the interstate system. Since the end of the First World War in 1918 only two states have broken up: the Austro-Hungarian empire in 1919 and Pakistan

in 1971. True, some developing countries, particularly of sub-Saharan Africa, have witnessed bitter ethnic conflicts (Nigeria and Sudan) in the 1960s and 1970s, but as yet no country has broken up.

Today, East Europe, the USSR, South Asia and West Asia are riven by ethnic conflicts and separatist demands. And what is happening in Yugoslavia and the USSR may happen elsewhere and perhaps on a larger scale. States have broken up in the past, though not without causing wars. Some ethnic and religious conflicts, like the ones in Lebanon, Iraq or Sudan, could be contained or localized, but can the ones in Europe, which has the highest concentration of military power, be contained? A disintegrating USSR is today the biggest source of instability. No order, certainly not as ambitious as the one Bush proposes, can be built in the face of the disintegration of a major power.

A confused, complex and greatly chaotic world has emerged from the events that took place between 1989 to 1991. Liberal pluralism is embraced by the victors of the 1989 revolution but the revolution itself has unleashed many tendencies and forces that are illiberal. Then there is the paradoxical phenomenon of integration and fragmentation at work simultaneously. The countries of Western Europe and North America are becoming more and more integrated by the force of the market, while the countries of East Europe are fragmenting under the weight of ethnic and sub-national forces.

The developing countries accept, willingly or unwillingly, their integration in the world market, but all except the East Asian countries (the (NICs), find that the domestic political costs of the integration are too high. They wonder whether they will become Peru or South Korea. Lastly, one pole of the old bipolar world, the Soviet Union, has now ceased to be a global power, but the other pole, the United States, has not gained as a result of the demise of its old rival, except diplomatically. It is the world's largest debtor, consistently losing to Japan

economically. To call this a unipolar world is a gross simplification of a highly complex reality.

This is the world President Bush wants to rearrange into a new order. Since America stepped on the world stage in 1944, every American President has felt that destiny demands he reshape the world in the American image. Liberal democracies tied to each other by the market and peacefully engaged in the pursuit of wealth rather than of conquest and power, has always been the American design for the world. It is characteristically American, for it fits so well with its values. To its credit, one must say that it has admirably succeeded in realizing its design vis-a-vis the industrialized countries. The Bretton Woods system was created to link the countries of North America, Western Europe and Japan by ties of trade, investment and communication. Liberal democracy was a vital element in this system and that is why democracy was imposed on Germany and Japan in 1945.

George Bush wants to extend this design to the rest of the world now that communism, the biggest obstacle to it, has been defeated. The important questions to ask are: does he have the resources to do so, and whether the world, with all its complexities and confusion, can be moulded according to the American design.

The United States has unmistakably declined economically. It emerged from the Second World War with extraordinary resources. Its share of aggregate production for all industrialized countries was 58% in 1953; it is now 35%. In 1960 the American economy was 10 times larger than that of Japan; by the late 1980s it was only about 70% larger. Another area in which American capabilities have unambiguously declined are monetary reserves. Its. share of world monetary reserves fell from 50% in 1948 to less than 13% in the mid-1980s. At the end of the Second World War, the United States had the power and the vision to provide Western Europe and Japan with security, prosperity and freedom, and to weave something of a community

of liberal, democratic, industrialized countries. It had the resources to generously assist Western Europe and, in the 1960s, give Japan access to its market without insisting on reciprocity.

Ubviously, it is no longer in any position to assume the role it did at the end of the war. Together with Japan and the European Economic Community, the US could perhaps build something of a liberal interdependent world order. All three basically desire it, but neither Europe nor Japan yet speak and think in terms of a world order. The Europeans are too parochial and yet too divided by old historic rivalries to articulate their design for the world. The French and the British opposed, rather weakly and maladroitly, the German demarches for unity. And the phrase 'world order objectives' simply does not exist in the Japanese political vocabulary; all they think of is trade.

Only the United States has consistently spoken of world order. George Bush does not have sufficient power to pursue it but he has enough arrogance and self-right-eousness to persist in it. He wants to build a new order resting on liberal democracy, which he insists must now be implanted the world over. He said last September, 'As I see the drama of democracy unfolding around the globe, (I feel) perhaps we are closer to that new world order than ever before.'

Of course George Bush is right: there is a democratic wave sweeping the globe. The 1980s saw the end of well-entrenched authoritarianism, first in Latin America and later in East Europe. The wave has disturbed China and some countries of Africa and South East Asia; only West Asia is immune from it. Islam is a powerful barrier to democracy and modernization, or so says Sir Bernard Lewis. Then there is a genuine concern, entirely\_spontaneous, for human rights. The recent crackdown by the Indonesian authorities in East Timur not only aroused worldwide indignation but it even disturbed the people in Jakarta. For the first time, democratic consciousness has dawned in the world.

. It is perfectly natural for the West to applaud and support this global democratic upsurge. However, in the name of a new world order, the United States wants to exploit it to serve the cause of capitalism. The connection is simple. For Washington, democracy very largely means a free play of the market forces. Competition between political parties and the rule of law are also attributes of democracy, but the US sees them as only complements to the market. Market makes the man and democracy is simply the system of governance of a capitalist society, the classical 19th century political economist Jeremy Benthem said. This proposition would be fully endorsed by Reaganites, who today command power in Washington and in other world capitals.

A he World Development Report, 1991, best expresses what the West means by democracy. It talks of states pursuing the 'market friendly' approach and then goes on to say, or imply, that democracy can only flourish in those countries which respect and strengthen market relations. The Bank-IMF prescription to all those who want their money (and this means all developing and East European countries, except East Asian and some South East Asian countries who have made it) is: stabilization, deregulation, dismantling of many state subsidies, external economic orientation. In short, swim in the turbulent currents of world economy or sink.

Of course this is not to defend the dirigist economy that many developing and socialist countries have had for years; it served no one except their authoritarian leaders. But the Bank-IMF prescriptions may well turn out to be disastrous for the countries which have just become democratic. Except for Hungary, all others in East Europe are floundering, economically and politically, and the possibility of a return to the kind of authoritarianism they had experienced in the 1920s is always there. The Latin American democracies see before them the remote prospect of becoming like South Korea or the immediate prospect of becoming like Peru, where everything is free—the market, drugs and arms.

he United States, with its myopic view of the world order and the policies that flow from it, may end up defeating the present democratic upsurge. It does not understand that what is needed is a more egalitarian world economic system to consolidate the incipient democracies of East Europe and the developing world. The new security system the United States wants to build in the post-cold war era is just as oppressive as the international economic system. It defeated Saddam Hussein because it thought that this Hitler was a threat to world peace. By waging the Gulf War it also sought to convey to all developing countries that they can have only a limited strategic autonomy, and will, from now on, be monitored by the West. Now India and Pakistan are pressured to give up their nuclear option and China is told not to sell weapons and technologies that aid nuclear proliferation.

Nuclear non-proliferation is a laudable objective and one does not have to wait for complete world disarmament to attain it. This is the specious plea of the Indian government to pursue its nuclear weapons programme. But what is needed is a more equitable security arrangement which would assure the security of all non-nuclear countries. A UN-managed collective security system is one such arrangement, and it could be realized if the United States empowers the UN to take on this task. Agreements between the great power on arms sales to the developing countries, voluntarily restraints on arms exports, regional security arrangements under UN supervision, are some other measures to create a more just international security system.

All this is unlikely to happen. The United States has always wanted to act alone because it thinks it is its destiny to make and remake the world. The end of the cold war and the worldwide democratic upsurge offered it a great opportunity to reshape a more cooperative, egalitarian world. Instead, all it seeks in the name of a new world order is the preservation of the status quo.

#### The fate of the USSR

ARUN BOSE

THE disintegration of the USSR (the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) is a fact which, it is now almost certain, not even what Marx's teacher Hegel called 'the cunning of history' is likely to reverse. At least not until, in the bizarre topsy-turvy world of the future, a time comes when some human adventurers live on earth satellites (or in colonies on the moon), while others return to the past. When a reunited Europe calls itself once again the Roman Empire. Or the territories of the empire of Genghis Khan (from Mongolia to China) are renamed the Chinese Empire. Or South Asia is renamed the empire of Ram or of Asoka.

The irreversibility of this disintegration could be visualized not when the Baltic republics declared their independence (with the approval of hardly any state in the outside world), but when in June 1990 the Russian Union Republic (the biggest and most populous of the 15 Union Republics of the USSR, where the USSR originated) declared its independence. With the declaration of independence and sovereignty of the

Ukraine about a year later (in explicit defiance of the US President George Bush's disapproval and threat of non-recognition), the irreversibility was doubly guaranteed. The reasons are several, and can be listed as follows.

First, the ultimate binding agent of the USSR was the ideological, political, military, economic dictatorship of the steel frame of the Bolshevik Party, which grew into the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) built by the 'maniof steel' Joseph Stalin. As recently as mid-August 1991, power-addicted Russian Communists were still fighting to retain power. The orthodox Russian Communist Party (which had seceded from the CPSU) expelled the leader of the newlyformed Democratic Party of Russian Communists, which had voted to remain within the CPSU. But these last remnants seem to have been shattered when the coup d'etat of the 'sincere (but incompetent) Communists' who engineered the threeday coup d'etat was undone by a Yeltsin-Gorbachev counter-coup, with the backing of a mass insurrection, with greater mass participation though with less bloodshed,

<sup>\*</sup>Written in mid-November.

than during the Socialist October Revolution of 1917.

Any lingering doubts on this score would be removed if it is remembered that the eight leaders of the coup did not speak in the name of either the CPSU or even of Lenin, but solely in the name of the on-going internal and external perestroika, or restructuring, of the USSR, to impose an authoritarian Emergency, modelled on the Emergency in India in the 1970s. (The only difference, it seems, was whether Yeltsin would impose an anticommunist Emergency by assuming all power as Stalin had done in 1940, but without formally banning the CPSU, or whether there would be an Emergency without banning the CPSU (or the Russian CP). It is now likely that Yeltsin's second attempt to ban the communist parties in the Russian Federation on 7 November 1991 will finally shatter the steel frame beyond repair, no matter whether or for how long Yeltsin survives the operation.

Second, the Soviet secret police, which Lenin called the 'unsheathed sword of the proletarian (communist) dictatorship...which is unrestricted by any laws', whose latest name was the KOB, could have served as an alternative binding agent. If only because the Soviet secret police has already been playing this role after Lenin's death (though from 1934 to 1952 every one of its top executives were executed). However, this possibility, too, should be discounted, for at least one conclusive reason. Both perestroika as well as glasnost (i.e. 'open politics') was initiated in the USSR by Andropov: the KGB chief who pushed through Soviet acceptance' of the Helsinki Pact and introduced the first dose of human (but not yet political) rights in the USSR, who as general secretary of the CPSU encouraged dissidents from Sakharov to Roy Medvedev, and whose protege was Gorbachev. A splintered and decimated KGB may still play a political role in a disintegrated USSR, but almost certainly not to save the USSR from partial or total disintegration.

Third, there is the Soviet Red Army. Can it prevent the disintegration of the USSR as a state, when the CPSU and the KGB cannot? Not so for at least two reasons. From whatever is known about the ethnic composition of the Soviet Red Army, it is more ethnically balanced than, say, the Yugoslav or the Indian Army, and not predominantly Russian. Moreover, it is divided politically—and the issue is not for or against the USSR. This was revealed in a flash during the coup and counter-coup of August 1991.

Lt is worth noting that the commander of the tank unit which refused to obey the order to kill demonstrators in Moscow and joined them instead, has subsequently protested against the banning of the CPSU within the armed forces. It is also worth noting that in Leningrad, now renamed St. Petersburg, Red Army veterans have marched in memory of those who defended Leningrad against the German-Nazi aggressors. None of these events point to the possibility of the Soviet Red Army capturing power and preventing successfully the disintegra-tion of the USSR, although more than one attempt may be made.

Fourth, it is sometimes suggested that the ethnic Russians and non-Russian populations are so intermixed in almost every part of the USSR, that the impossibility of 'unscrambling the ethnic omelette' will prevent its disintegration. But against this is the fact that in at least half the 15 major 'union republics' of the USSR, the overwhelming votes in favour of sovereignty and independence indicate that some, perhaps the majority of ethnic Russians in some cases, have joined the local population in voting for sovereignty and independence.

Perhaps equally significant is the fact that the referenda were held at all, that they did not cause bloodshed, that there have been no complaints of rigging, and that no attempt has been made, except unsuccessful ones, to set aside the verdicts. Besides, the Russian federation responded to the proclamations of independence, not by refusing to accept them, still less to force them to remain inside the USSR, but by proclaiming Russia's independence. It should be noted that this happen-

ed in spite of the explicit threat by the US President to boycott those states which secede from the USSR and establish 'regional despotisms'.

Fifth, of course, is the factor of the universal hunger for foreign economic aid and foreign investment and trade in all the states of USSR. The USA has been almost insisting that to get aid, investment and expanded trade, the USSR must remain one state. But this pressure is not likely to prevent disintegration. The main thrust for disintegration is political, not economic (nor even ideological, since communism has been repudiated by the effective majority in all the states of the USSR. without exception). The mood is in favour of politics first, then economics. Nor is the pressure of the USA likely to work. It is not the USA but Germany and, potentially, Japan that can play a decisive role in shaping the economic future of a disintegrating USSR. Both Germany and Japan are much more interested in the economic potentials (especially in oil, gas and metals) of Russia than in other states of the USSR, though neither seem to be keen on keeping Russia as its exclusive preserve (or footing the entire bill for Russian economic recovery and re-development).

As for the USA, its economic argument in favour of preserving the USSR as it is, is spurious. It has neither the need nor the capacity to satisfy the hunger for economic resources in the region. It does not have the need since, after its war against Iraq over Kuwait, it secured a firm grip over the largest concentration of exportable oil resources in the world. It therefore has no further need for Soviet oil resources. Nor does it have the economic capacity to develop Soviet oil resources with the massive investments required. It is no longer the world's chief creditor, but the world's leading debtor.

It remains to consider two other arguments against the possibility of disintegration of the USSR which seem to weigh with those who celebrate the end of the USSR as a communist superpower, but are apprehensive of its consequences, or who mourn the event. Should not the integrity of the USSR be maintained

at all costs to prevent misuse of the awesome nuclear military power of what is still one of the two nuclear military superpowers, albeit an inactive one? Should not Russia, the Ukraine and Kazakhstan at least, therefore have an interest in keeping the USSR intact as a state which exercises single control over the USSR's assets of nuclear weaponry housed in these three states? Especially when at the behest of the USA the NATO powers want it that way?

L he answer is: no. If only because, provided that the resulting large-scale unemployment effects can be taken care of, the best answer to these questions is for the disintegrating USSR to scrap all its nuclear weapons. (After all, unlike the USA, the USSR never used a single nuclear weapon in war, though it did threaten to use it twice. One of the reasons was the pacifism of the peoples of the USSR born during the ravages of war against the Nazi aggression which bled them white. This pacifism has been sharpened after the senseless suffering undergone during the Soviet military intervention in the civil war in Afghanistan.)

If Germany and Japan can manage without nuclear weapons, not only when they were prostrate before the USA, but now, when they were being blackmailed by it to finance its war against Iraq, why can't the states of the USSR with nuclear weapons do the same? Especially when Germany and Japan are likely to welcome the decision as a major step towards nuclear disarmament by the USA too?

Those who mourn the end of communism in the USSR probably outnumber those who are opposed to the dissolution of the CPSU and of the national CPs in Russia and most of the other republics. Moreover, they seem to belong to most of these republics. They seem to be adherents of communism as a popular religion, founded on the faith in the purity of Lenin's ideals, whose watchwords are 'Lenin lives', 'Lenin is with us'. It is possible that this religious or semi-religious moral movement will grow not only in Russia but throughout the USSR. Like all other religious believers, its devotees invest the object of their veneration (in this case Lenin) with all the virtues they want to see practised.

But as is always the case with religious belief systems, the faith of the believers is lacking in unbelievers, and in those who are devotees of other religions. In the USSR, faith in Lenin's ideals is challenged by those who are convinced he had no ideals (except the ideal of absolute power), or who have faith in Christ ('Christ lives') or in Allah ('Allah-o-Akbar'). None of these growing religious movements can hope to become strong enough to prevent the disintegration of the USSR, whether or not they attain the status of state religions in one or another of the seceding states.

L he foregoing arguments point to the conclusion that the future of the USSR almost certainly involves the disintegration of the USSR. It was necessary to labour the point a bit to challenge vague notions that disintegration can somehow be averted. It need not, however, be total, in the sense that all the 15 major states secede (still less that even the Russian federation is broken up by secession of some of its autonomous states and regions), and each seceding state has only bilateral relations with the others, with no confederal or coordinating common centre. This is what the Baltic states want, with the long-term aim, perhaps, of joining a finally unified Europe, when and if it takes shape, and if the Scandinavian states of Sweden and Finland join it. It is modelled on South Asia without even SAARC. Such a prospect cannot be ruled out altogether as one, rather extreme, possibility.

But there are many other possible patterns of partial disintegration of the USSR as a step towards different kinds of partial reintegration of most of the states on a new basis. In fact, the only prospect that can be ruled out altogether is a total reintegration of all the states comprising the USSR, including the Baltic republics, to reconstitute the USSR as a renamed Union of Sovereign Republics (USR) or the Union of Sovereign States (USS). Drop-

ping the words 'Soviet' and 'Socialist' is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the Baltic republics to join. So the re-integration cannot but be partial. But whatever the patterns and terms of a partial reintegration may be, it is impossible to visualize at present. There seem to be no firm clues available.

Ferhaps the only sthing that can be said about partial reintegration prospects is that the details may contain some surprises. Not only ethnic demographic majorities, but ethnic minorities locked in by them (e.g. Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh 'trapped' inside Azerbaijan) may exercise their self-determination to the point of attainment of sovereign independence within the framework of partial reintegration. Different national currencies may be legal tender in some or all states e.g. the Russian rouble and an Ukrainian currency). Members of one ethno-demographic entity may enjoy citizenship rights as permanent residents in states where other ethno-demographic entities constitute majorities or enjoy the right to dual citizenship with voting rights in one of the two states. Every state taking part in the reintegration may enjoy fiscal sovereignty as regards raising and spending economic resources. Every partially reintegrating state would enjoy military sovereignty, with its own armed forces at its own desired level of armament or disarmament, with its own rules for deployment inside and outside its borders. Every reintegrating state would occupy the seat reserved for the USSR as a permanent member of the UN Security Council by rotation

If such surprises materialize, the painful readjustments of disintegration may be compensated by reintegration which is not imposed, but accepted by all concerned, in fulfilment of the urge for self-determination. Together, the processes of disintegration and reintegration on this new basis may be a blessing, not only in the disintegrating USSR, but elsewhere. Wherever the cycles of disintegration and imposed reintegration are leading nowhere. In Yugoslavia, in West Asia, in Afghanistan, Pakistan, in Sri Lanka, in Burma (or Myanmar), and not least, in India.

# Europe after 1992

ARJUN SENGUPTA

ON 9 and 10 December 1991, the 12 heads of governments of the member states of the European Community at their summit meeting at Maastricht took the most decisive step towards the formation of a federal Europe. They were still not using the word federal, because of the intense controversy that had been generated around the meaning and significance of that word. Instead, they would call the Europe emerging from the Maastricht agreement as the European Union, one step further in the process of Europe's unification after the European Community.

Jacques Delors, President of the European Commission, described this reticence about using the word 'federal' as trying to hide under the table the expression which was most appropriate, because some member governments, hinting openly at the British, had made it into a kind of an 'F-word'. To him, the controversy was almost entirely linguistic as everybody realized that the process of unification would inexorably lead to a federation. The reality, however, was more complicated. The fight over the word 'federal' was essentially a fight against extending the scope of competence of the European Community, compromising the sovereignty of the national governments of the member states. Ultimately the federalists won the fight by keeping the process intact. But the British succeeded in persuading the other 11 members to

drop the word 'federal' from the preamble of the draft treaty.

Most Europeans think that the process of unification would lead to a federal structure of decisionmaking, without necessarily leading to centralization. Indeed the German model of federalism, which many regard to be the future model for Europe, is highly decentralized with most of the decisions being taken at the local level. In Europe also, after Maastricht, there will be two levels of decision-making. The matters which can be settled at the local level will continue to be decided at that level, which may often be lower than the level of the national governments.

But matters which go beyond the jurisdiction of the local and national interests and which involve interaction among the member states will be decided more and more on the basis of a common European position. The member states may continue to deliberate, discuss and negotiate among themselves about the details of that common position. But once that position is reached, they will abide by it and give up the autonomy of pursuing any other independent position. That common European position would, in essence, be nothing short of a federal position.

Over the next few years, the Europeans will work out the mechanisms of the decision-making process: which decisions have to

be taken unanimously and which ones by a qualified or a simple majority and what will be the forum of negotiation. Will it be the national parliaments or the European Parliament and what will be the extent of authority of the European Parliament over the national governments and the European Commission? There will also be intensive negotiations about the scope of the areas to be subjected to the common European position.

At Maastricht, the European leaders agreed that they would have a common foreign and security policy eventually leading to a common defence policy, a common policy regarding law and order, judiciary and immigration and that there would also be a common European citizenship. Eleven of them have agreed to have a common social policy which, they believe, Britain will ultimately join. However, the details of these common policies have not yet been worked out and it will take several years for them to be formalized.

There will no doubt be prolonged and often acrimonious debate on each of these subjects, because every time a common European position is taken, the member states will have to give up a part of their national sovereignty. It is now generally recognized that in an interdependent world, any method of coordination to achieve an optimal outcome of policies would involve the sacrifice of national sovereignty. Paul Streeten attributed to Jagdish Bhagwati the statement that 'sovereignty is like virginity; once a nation has intercourse with the outside world, she has lost it'. But the nation states do not alway recognize this and they bargain very hard before accepting a supra-national authority even if the benefits are obvious.

So the process of reaching the final stage of federation with a common European position on many areas of common concern can be quite delayed. There may be fast progress in some areas and a slow, and halting move in others. The British have ideological problems in accepting a common social charter that other Europeans con-

sider essential in their perception of the state policies. Unless Labour wins the next election, progress in this area may be very limited. Although the 11 other members have publicly pronounced their intention to pursue the social charter on their own, excluding Britain, they would soon find that this would give a competitive advantage to Britain in attracting investment essentially from outside Europefrom Japan and the United States. They would, therefore, try and persuade Britain to fall in line with them, thus postponing the process of implementation.

The French have difficulties over extending the powers of the European Parliament. The Dutch have problems in the field of a common defence policy. Spain, Portugal and Greece would like changes in the cohesion policy, over budgetary transfer to the poorer parts of Europe, which may not be acceptable to the others. And there would probably be acrimonious differences on the details of a common immigration policy.

All these, however, cannot change the basic character of the decision taken at Maastricht. There is going to be a united Europe and the European nation states have agreed to give up their national sovereignty in accepting common European positions on matters of vital concern to them. For the world outside this is the most momentous outcome of the Maastricht summit, because the Europe that will be reflected in their common European positions would be one of the greatest powers in the world, with the ability to influence the developments in the entire arena of international relations. Indeed, the agreements on the common foreign and security policy distinctly suggest that Europeans would eventually have a regular army under a common command. They would be able to deploy it to protect their perceived security and foreign policy interests, if necessary.

The areas where the details of the common European position have been almost fully finalized are economic and commercial. The European Monetary Union treaty has now fixed the date by which one

common currency will be established for Europe. It will be preceded by the setting up of a European Central Bank determining a cormon monetary policy for all members of the Monetary Union. It has allowed Britain to opt out from this agreement if it so desires and has also laid down the precise steps by which the potential members of the Union would converge their monetary and fiscal policies.

he Monetary Union comes at the end of a long process of forging the economic and commercial unity of Europe. The European Coal and Steel Community and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) of the 1950s merged with the European Economic Community, established by the treaty of Rome of 1957, creating a free trade area. The EEC became a Customs Union in 1968 with common external tariffs. As the volume of trade and economic interactions between the member states expanded, the European leaders recognized the need for closer monetary cooperation for a stable growth of their markets, as well as output and employment. While the world was moving out of the fixed exchange rates with the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, permitting the exchange rates to float, the European Community was moving towards stable exchange relations between their currencies, within a so-called 'snake'. In 1979 the European Monetary System was established with an exchange rate mechanism keeping the exchange rate of currencies within a narrow fluctuation band.

By the late 1980s, the Community was moving towards a single market removing all the barriers to the free flow of trade and transactions in commodity, services, labour and capital among the countries. The member states were suffendering their competence in formulating and enforcing the rules of operation in this area to the institutions of the Community, The operation of the European Monetary Systemic was already forcing the member states to follow common monetary and fiscal disciplines. It was just logical at that stage for Jacques Delors, to -suggest, in 1989; a move towards a

full economic and monetary union, with a common currency, a common monetary policy and a common central bank. The Maastricht conference put the final stamp of acceptance on this process by the European leaders. The European Community, which was evolving into one commercial entity through the implementation of the Single Market Act, will become one economic and monetary identity by the end of this decade.

L he importance of this new European Union to the world at large will become obvious if one compares its size with the US and Japan. The gross domestic product of the European Community was \$4788 billion compared to the US figure of \$4809 billion and Japan's \$2848 billion in 1988. The total import into the Economic Community from the rest of the world was \$497 billion in 1988 compared to \$459 billion for the US and \$187 billion for Japan. By 1990, the Economic Community's GDP \$6010 billion exceeded both the US GDP of \$5329 billion and the Japanese GDP of \$2941 billion.

Total imports to EC was \$496 million that year compared to the US figure of \$459 million and the Japanese figure of \$187 million. Population in Europe was about 327 million compared to 246 million for the USA and 122 million for Japan. On the average, therefore, GDP per head was lower in EC compared to both USA and Japan. But in aid to the third world, the Community was ahead of both. In 1989 the Community and the member states taken together provided public aid of \$22,800 million whereas USA provided \$7659 million and Japan \$8949 million. Other Western industrialized countries taken together gave only \$8000 million and Arab countries only \$1469 million.

All these figures pertain to the European Community of 12 countries. But now there is every indication that within a few years, its membership will expand, with Sweden and Austria joining first, followed by all the BFTA countries. Even if they do not become full members of the Community and share in the decision-making pro-

cess, they will at least be part of the free trade area providing an ever larger market for the rest of the world.

There have been many studies on the impact of the single market on the growth of European GNP and its consequence on the growth of the Community's imports from the outside world. These effects will be strengthened with a greater monetary and fiscal discipline resulting from the method towards the monetary union unless there is a substantial recession in the US or the rest of the world. The impact of this growth in Europe on the growth of exports of the third world is difficult to quantify.

The trade creation effect—(higher incomes in the Community leading could often to higher imports be neutralized by trade diversion effects-demand for imports from outside being redirected to the suppliers within Europe). There will be trade diversion even if there is no 'Fortress Europe', or no deliberate attempt is made by the Europeans to increase the tariff and non-tariff barriers on imports from the outside. The expanding supplies of the EC industries through increasing returns and improved specialization would make themselves more competitive and cost effective and divert trade from the outside sources.

A few studies that are available on the basis of the existing composition of trade suggest that the net effect may not be substantial, especially if it cannot capture the dynamic effects and go beyond the existing pattern of trade in goods and services. Indeed the message from these studies is very clear. If any country in the outside world has to benefit most from the major structural change in Europe, it has to go through a structural change itself. It has to think of a new way of trading with Europe, in new areas with new approaches, based on new links of finance, technology and markets.

This is particularly true for India. The trade creation effect of the ECincome growth would be relatively large for agricultural and tropical products and for minerals, metals and fuels, since these goods are usually not produced within the EC. Indian exports, however, are currently concentrated in other sectors, in items like coffee, tea and animal feed-stuff with rather low income elasticity of demand. Unless we move aggressively into the new markets of agricultural and primary products, we may not be able to reap much benefit from this expanding trade.

L he income elasticity of demand in EC is very high for manufactures; but that is also the area where competitiveness is very strong, both from the suppliers within the EC itself and from other industrial and middle-income developing countries. At least one study has shown that if India did not diversify its exports in manufactures to new areas with increased competitiveness, it cannot expect to get even 5% of the market for manufactures exports that the Community will create for the existing supplies from developing countries.

What is required for India, therefore, is to adopt a strategy to enter into new markets, build up new contacts, supply new product lines and make a new beginning. A fast and dynamic market is being created in Europe, propelled by competitiveness and innovation. There is nothing that can prevent India from exploiting this market potential if we can appropriately seize the opportunity.

We must allow our export sector to get enmeshed and integrated in the production and marketing structure of Europe. World trade in manufactures now is increasingly carried on within an industry among items in different stages of production. Both the technology and the production structure in most of the industries are becoming globalized, trading in intermediate and final products through criss-cross exports and imports. Our business must join vigorously in that process of globalization. Otherwise, we shall be increasingly left out from the mainstream of international trade.

In this process of globalization there is no dominant or dominated

relationship. Supplies to an expanding market like Europe would come from global units drawing from competitive sources all over the world. It is no longer true that industrial countries provide investment capital and developing countries like us only supply the raw materials. New production and supply units are getting established on the basis of both-way transactions of finance, technology, product design, intermediate products at different stages of production and market sharing. We must allow the business in India to participate in that process and find their partners in Europe so long as they are earning profits and foreign exchange for India.

This process of integration will strengthen the bonds between Europe and India and will surely be reflected in a greater political understanding between these two democratic entities. As the European Union builds up a new identity with a common foreign policy, it is expected to look for new alliances and special relationships with other countries in the world. India stands in a unique position in this regard. It is practically the only third world country trying to solve the economic and political problems of a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual society within a democratic set-up.

In a sense, the Indian experiment is very similar to what the Europeans are trying to achieve—the integration of a multinational community into a common and prosperous economic and political union through common markets and democratic governments. Only India is much poorer, and therefore has many more problems. For many Europeans, India would appear to be the most natural ally of the new Europe.

For India, a close political relationship with the new Europe, which would emerge as a major power centre of the world after it forges a common foreign and security policy, would be of immense benefit. The Indian foreign policy for years to come would naturally strive to build that close relationship, through building up linkages between Europe and India in all areas.

## The Soviet crisis and India

MOHIT SEN

THE Soviet Union is literally struggling for its existence. Its crisis is both extraordinarily deep and multidimensional. Among the most important aspects of this crisis is the national or ethnic eruption. This aspect, it would appear to many, is of the greatest relevance to us since our country, too, is a multi-ethnic one. Whether this is really so or not requires analysis and judgement.

To understand the background of the national or ethnic aspect of the Soviet crisis, it is essential to have some appreciation of the Marxist-Leninist approach to the national question. This is necessary if only for the simple reason that till very recently the Soviet Union was an ideological state. In that sense it was not a secular state. Its Constitution itself declared that the guiding

philosophy of the Soviet state was Marxism-Leninism and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was the ruling party. (The difference with our own Constitution literally leaps to the eye but of this something a little later on.)

One of the most important missing components of Marx's theoretical framework was precisely a comprehensive working out of his views on the national question. References to this question are, of course, to be found in many of his writings. He was for the unification of Germany, for example, under democratic auspices if possible but under Bismark if necessary. He was in sympathy with Hungarian nationalism and Italian nationalism which was taking shape in his times, though he was quite caustic about the outpourings of Kossuth and Mazzinni. He opposed what he called the 'reactionary nationalism' of the Czechs and Slovaks and, to an extent, of the Polish. He was extremely sympathetic, however, to the Irish, Indian and Chinese national struggles against the British colonialists.

Perhaps, his views on this question can best be summed up by two rather fleeting comments in *The Communist Manifesto*. In one place he asserts that 'working men have no country' and in another that 'the proletariat must constitute the 'nation'. Then, of course, there is the famous battlecry, 'Workingmen of all countries, Unite!'

he nation and the working class both came into being, as it were, in the capitalist epoch of history. The nation, however, preceded the working class in birth and in stabilizing as a historically formed entity. It was a multiclass entity and had an existence beyond the classes constituting it. Marx correctly emphasized that it was on national terrain that t the class struggle was fought and that nationalism was used by the capitalist class to divide the working class belonging to different nations and to drown class consciousness within the nation.

What Marx did not elaborate was that nationalism, being a multiclass ideological phenomenon, was itself the terrain of class struggle. That class could become the leader of the nation which was best able to serve the interests of all the historically progressive forces of the nation and which best represented the traditions, culture and the general interest of the nation.

Lenin both developed and corrected the heritage of Marx on the national question. He treated the nation as a historically evolved entity with an identity and longevity of its own. Hence his insistence on the right of nations as such to self-determination to the point of secession. He opposed both Rosa Luxembourg and Bukharin on this point since the two stood for the self-determination of the oppressed within the nation alone.

Lenin has also to be credited for working out the basic outlines of the theory of the national liberation revolution in the colonies and semicolonies. Unlike M N Roy, he saw these revolutions as multiclass revolutions in which the proletariat had to participate but which it need not necessarily lead. That is why when the socialist revolution swept to victory, though not synchronously, all over the Tsarist empire, Lenin continued to insist that those nations who wished to opt for independence should be allowed to do so. Finland was the most important but not the only example of a nation opting out after the victory of the socialist revolution.

When the Soviet Union was itself constituted in 1922, it represented the coming together of four independent Soviet socialist republicsthe Russian, the Ukrainian, the Belorussian and the Transcaucasian. The last named was made up of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The Russian Republic also maintained treaty relations with the People's Soviet Republics of Bukhara and Khorezem. It was on Lenin's insistence that eventually the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics represented a federation of equal republics. It was because of his opposition that Stalin's plan to treat the Ukraine, Belorussia, Azerbaijan and Armenia as autonomous units of the Russian Soviet Federation of Socialist Republics which would maintain treaty relations with the People's Soviet Republics of Bukhara and Khorezem and the Far Eastern Republic, was defeated. Lenin warned particularly against Great Russian chauvinism while also advocating the need to combat parochial nationalism. The right of secession was also granted to all republics on his insistence. According to Lenin, national feelings would exist even under communism.

Later on there was both a rearrangement of republics broadly on a linguistic basis—Turkmenia, Khirghzia, Kazakhastan, Uzbegistan, came into being as full-fledged republics—as well as the incorporation of other nations—the Baltic States, Moldavia, Karelia and the expansion of the Ukraine.

In the period of Stalin's domination (1929-53) there were two parallel processes of development. On the one hand, great efforts were made to remove the backwardness of the constituent republics. A new intelligentsia was created where in many places total illiteracy had prevailed. Industries came into being and agricultural development took place on an extensive scale. On the other hand, there was supercentralization of power, neglect of national dignity, an imposition of mechanical uniformity and the subordination of everything to the building up of the military might of the Soviet Union.

With some modifications and a measure of liberalization, these two processes continued after Stalin's death till perestroika arrived in 1985. In this entire period there were some other aspects of the policy pursued which need to be underlined. Particularly in the Stalin period but not substantially undone even after his death, there was arbitrary and cruel treatment of some minor nationalities whose loyalty was suspected on subjective and unfounded grounds. This was part of the general lack of democracy in the Soviet Union as a whole, and it created a general atmosphere of fear and mistrust.

The policy orientation was based on a particular type of economism, in the ideological sense of the term.

The belief seemed to have been that material betterment by itself would create Soviet patriotism among the non-Russian nations. This was coupled with the false propaganda that such patriotism had already come into existence and supplanted national feelings. In fact, what took place was the steady progress of Russification and the over-identification of the Soviet Union with Russia. There was in the sphere of national policy, as elsewhere, a yawning gap between theory and practice, between propaganda and reality.

I he basic point about the national dimension of the Soviet crisis is that the multinational reality of the Soviet Union was never fully accepted after the death of Lenin and the waning of Leninism. The result was that in conditions of democratization and the questioning of the past, this multinational character has asserted itself in the almost total break up of the Soviet Union itself. Secession has become the form of national identification and assertion. There is chauvinism also, but the basic reality is that of national assertion.

The perestroika leadership was slow in accepting this reality and also hamstrung by neo-Stalinist opposition, especially in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The Baltic Republics should have been given the right to independence much earlier and much more voluntarily. The concept of the confederation of sovereign, equal republics should also have been advanced much earlier. These mistakes and delays were compounded by the abortive coup in August 1991. The fact that it at all took place alarmed the republics against having any kind of strong central authority. And the fact that Yeltsin played such a leading role in defeating the coup also roused fears of Russian domination. The overriding factor behind the present desperate situation is, of course, the failure to work out what can be called the political economy of perestroika.

If, at all, there are some reasons for hope that the confederation concept would find acceptance, it is because of the achievements of the

past, the creation of economic ties between all the republics and the international situation of the easing of East-West tension and, above all, because Leninism still lives in Russia and some of the republics though it is a precarious and assaulted existence. Perestroika might still triumph.

Contrary to what some are urging in our country, the main lesson we can learn from the Soviet experience and crisis is not that the states have to be given ever greater autonomy. India is not a union of nationalities. It was not brought into existence on 15 August 1947 by the agreement of different republics. Our revolution was an all-India one led by the Indian National Congress and participated in by other all-India parties. There was and is no oppressor nation in India. Every state demands more from the centre but quarrels with every other state, especially its neighbours, e.g. Karnataka and Tamilnadu. The uneven development between states is equalled by that within states.

India is a unique nation. It is a multi-ethnic nation whose components and the totality developed simultaneously over the centuries. It is not a country of unity and diversity. It is a country of unity through diversity. What India lacked through the critical centuries of the emergence of modern history was a strong national state. This it won through the freedom struggle or national revolution. It is this state that has to be strengthened. This needs to be done by making our secular democratic system both more strongly secular and democratic. Decentralization is required to strengthen the base of democracy and not the power of state bosses.

India needs, above all, to avoid authoritarianism, mechanical uniformity and falsehood. It needs the unification of all patriotic, secular and progressive parties and forces. It needs to speed up development, reduce vertical and horizontal disparities and to drastically lessen corruption and privilege. It needs to implement the declarations in the Constitution. It needs to be itself. And the Soviet Union and the world needs an India which is itself.

### The future of democracy

NIRAJA GOPAL JAYAL

THE events of 1991 in Eastern Europe have occasioned much exultation in the Western world, long the self-proclaimed bastion of democracy and the self-appointed arbiter of who else may or may not share this coveted label. Implicit in this celebration is some notion of democracy as an achieved condition, of the relentless and eventually triumphant march of humanity towards the goal of democracy which, in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, came to be almost universally acknowledged-along with the nation state—as the normatively superior form of political organization for all. Viewed as the satisfactory culmination of an mevitable historical process, 1991 has been celebrated not so much for the fruits of democracy it putatively brings to the citizens of Eastern European societies, but more for the capitulation it represents of, as it were, Them to Us. One of the minor advantages of belonging to the third world (even if the category is on its way to becoming obsolete) may be that it enables us to enter some caveats about the future of democracy in the face of Western complacency, and to entertain some anxiety about what may actually lie ahead.

The challenges to democracy are clearly multifarious, and in a world

as complex as ours, they could hardly be otherwise. But perhaps the biggest challenge lies concealed in the very heart of the dominant interpretation of the events of 1991. Indeed, if the fate of democracy seems to hang in the balance today, it is because this interpretation sees in the apostasy of Eastern Europe the satisfactory completion of the political project of the Enlightenment, the final and victorious achievement of democracy. It is however possible to read these same events somewhat differently: as an international collapse to the narrowest definition of democracy as a procedure for decision-making.

This minimalist, institutional and instrumentalist view of democracy, it may be argued, tends to reduce the richness, complexity and meaningful substance of the democratic ideal. In equating democracy with the organizing principle of the polity, it tends to lose sight of democracy as a value that should imbue and permeate all spheres of social life and social relations. It is only within an interpretation of democracy in the latter sense that other social and political valuessuch as rights, liberty, equality, justice and the public good-have their being. That democracy, the dramatic spread of which has generated so much jubilation, is actually a truncated and pale shadow of the real thing, a mere mechanism for arriving at decisions, one which says little or nothing about the reasons why we consider democracy inherently desirable.

Surely the desirability of democracy and its normative supriority as a social and political goal cannot vest entirely in its fairness as a decision-making procedure; the opportunities for representation it provides to citizens; and the accountability of leaders that it may facilitate. In reality, even in the so-called democratic world, these have been illusory, if not rhetorical, achievements, and not a few critics within the West have pointed to the limitations of democracy in their own societies. That these critics have belonged to vastly different political persuasions only serves to reinforce the point.

In the 1970s a huge liberal moan was heard across Europe, the USA and Japan, about the ungovernability of democracy. Democracy, according to this lament, made possible the insistent articulation of too many demands, resulting in overloaded government (picturesquely described as an 'arthritic octopus'), and, eventually and tautologically, the crisis of democracy itself.<sup>1</sup> At about the same time, neoconservatives were arguing that too much democracy had undermined liberalism, which had virtually parented democracy in the first place and which was its justifying principle. The concern for democratic equality and social justice has, on this account, provoked wanton and excessive intervention by the welfare state, leading to an abridgment of individual liberty.

Meanwhile, radical liberals began arguing for more participatory democracy, expressing their dissatisfaction with representative democracy which was manifestly inadequate because confined to the sphere of government, whether national or local. The democratic process, they argued, should provide for equal participation in the making of deci-

sions, equal power in the determination of the outcome of decisions, and, above all, for the education and training of the individual in civic virtue, making possible a self-sustaining and stable democratic community.<sup>3</sup>

he most trenchant criticism of the 'broken promises' of democracy in advanced capitalist societies4 has, however. come from left-wing critics. In place of the visibility and transparency of power which should characterize democratic societies, they find themselves confronted with various forms of invisible power: national security agencies; secret police; and the uniquely Italian problem of sottogoverno (or subterraparallel government, a administration controlling key economic and welfare services). At the same time, democracy in these societies has been confined to a limited space, and at least two important blocks of concentrated power-big business and bureaucracy-have remained insulated from the process of democratization. Radical critics therefore demand the democratic accountability not only of the state but of society: the democratization of social relations in general by the extension of democratic control to a number of areas within society. A prerequisite of this is, of course, the politically educated citizen, and this political equality, for the radical critic, should consist of more than the formal entitlement of one vote for each person.

At the level of political practice, the arguments of the left-wing critics and of participatory theorists of democracy have been supported by the 'new social movements'—such as the women's movement, the peace movement and the ecological movement—all of which have urged an extension of the public realm; a greater control by individuals and groups over decisions which vitally

affect their lives; and a genuine democratization of civil society.

Clearly, then, there are values and principles meant to be realized by democratic institutions, and the political-institutional arrangements which can help us achieve these are an important element—but not the whole—of the democratic concern. To mistake the part for the whole, and the instrument for the ideal is an egregious error which is constantly and loudly echoed in the pervasive optimism about the future of democracy that we have encountered in the course of the last year. Our preference for the democratic principle, and its justification, have much to do with the genuine concern with civil liberties and political rights, with equality and justice, that should be the defining characteristic of democracy. To reduce democracy to a matter of devising the fairest possible decision-making procedure is to undermine it most profoundly.

btaining popular acceptance for a notion of democracy more substantive than the procedural and instrumentalist is, therefore, one of the greatest challenges to democracy today. There are, of course, many others, including some that we might briefly consider here: spreading democracy to different areas of social life; resolving the tension between universalizing democratic forces and the revival of ethnic particularism; striking a balance between the local, national and international levels of democratic practice; and, above all, making democracy speak to different contexts, places and people in different but equally meaningful ways.

The democratizing of civil society must, it is self-evident, form an integral part of the democratic project, which cannot be considered complete so long as vast areas of society remain untouched by it. This would involve the democratic reconstitution of the diverse spheres and institution in and through which our everyday lives find expression and meaning; including gender relations; the family; education; bureaucracy; and, above all, the workplace, especially in industry. This would require a recognition of persons not only as citizens of the state, but as

<sup>1.</sup> Michel Crozier, Samuel P. Huntington and Joji Watanuki (eds.) The Crisis of Democracy. New York, New York University Press, 1975.

<sup>2.</sup> Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State and Utopia, New York, Basic Books, 1974.

<sup>3.</sup> Carole Pateman, Participation and Democratic Theory. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1970; Benjamin Barber, Strong Democracy. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1984.

<sup>4</sup> Norberto Bobbio, The Future of Democracy. Oxford, Polity Press. 1987; John Keane, Democracy and Civil Society. London, Verso, 1988.

citizens of society as well, with the right of equal participation in and control over the various institutions which determine their social existence. The rights of communities over common property resources in nature, for instance, is one example of this.

We would do well to remember, secondly, that the universalization of democracy that is supposed to have occurred in the last two years has been paralleled by a relentless and vastly encompassing process of globalization, to which multinational corporations and the telecommunications revolution have contributed not a little. The intensification. in recent decades, in the global flow of persons, goods, money and, not least of all, ideas and images, is a significant development, but the fact that these have different local resonances in different places should warn us of the limits of universalizing tendencies. In fact, the other side of the universalizing coineven as symbolized by the dollar bill—is the revival of ethnic particularism, in societies as diverse as the USSR, India and Canada. How do we explain the purchase currently enjoyed by, on the one hand, the universalizing trend towards democracy and, on the other, the particularizing tendencies represented by ethnic and secessionist movements the world over? Does the simultaneity of these processes exemplify some strange irony of history, or is it a contradiction that only a genuinely democratic world can resolve?

Thirdly, from the recognition of global interconnectedness, it is but a short step to the recognition that the problems and policies of nations are not determined exclusively within their territorial boundaries, but are often the outcomes of policies made by other states. The extent of inter-impactedness between states in international society makes it imperative that democracy be secured not only within societiesat every level, local, regional and national-but also between states. Without necessarily forsaking the principle of national sovereignty for the attractive prospect of some sort of international confederation (perhaps in the shape of a reformed United Nations), it is important to provide against the kinds of external influences that frequently undermine democracy, while building safeguards to ensure both control by citizens over their own social environment and the equality of member states in the international political order.

Clearly, 'the master-term' democracy gets translated very differently in different societies and 'ideoscapes'5—from Poland to the Philippines, and from China to Haiti. In India, for instance, we have taken great pride in being called 'the world's largest democracy', which is nothing more or less than having the numerically largest body of enfranchized citizens. We have gone further and periodically indulged in profuse self-congratulation—as, for instance, in the 1977 post-Emergency election-describing ourselves as a 'mature' democracy, with a discerning, even if largely non-literate, electorate.

Lven as this is said, it is hard to escape the condescension that tints the pleasant surprise in the tones of elite analysts of elections. Through elections—which are today a sport rivalling the nationally popular game of cricket—we have become depoliticized consumers of a politi-cal hardsell of candidates and images, packaged and marketed with great expertise by those who have previously excelled at selling soap and cigarettes. But even as we rejoice in our democratic credentials, the ease with which we forget the resilience of dynastic politics; civil rights violations; the bureaucratization of society; the centralized nature of our federalism; and the attempts to banish popular participation from a voice in development projects, surely says something about the nature of our democracy.

And yet, while thus appealing to some overarching, perhaps even universal, meaning of democracy, however hazily defined, we can hardly fail to notice the fact that the discourse of democracy translates differently, not only across

time, but also across space; that democracy will not only be articulated in many different accents, but will speak in many different tongues to different people. There is no reason to privilege one notion of democracy over another; so much better, surely, to acknowledge differences in their sameness.

Tetting beyond democracy as merely procedure and institutional arrangements is however not without its attendant problems, preeminently the problem of routinization. The logic of democratic participation demands that the state be continuously responsive—if not subject—to popular demands; and that rights of participation be extended to different arenas of social life. But democratic institutions, even as they create channels of political participation, necessarily seek to control and limit their impact. It is the acceptance by people of genuine but limited participation that is the source of stability, or else the process of democratic participation threatens to become an end in itself. And thus the paradox of democracy: unremitting participation leads to instability, while routinization leads to the numbing of democracy in the long run. The conundrum then is of how to arrest the logic of participation without impairing it, and to create and sustain space for democracy without falling into the routinizat on trap.

Many of the problems and paradoxes of democracy that we consider specific to our times have been debated, in one form or another, in older traditions of political theory. The emphasis on participation, for instance, finds classical articulation in the writings of Rousseau in the 18th and JS Mill in the 19th centuries. But 19th century theorists of democracy, much less their 17th century forebears, could hardly have foreseen the shape democracy would take in the 20th, Soothsaying, therefore, is a futile exercise but it is still a reasonably saferguess to hazard that the search for giving greater meaning and substance to democracy is nowhere near com-plete, and the quest for adequate mechanisms for realizing it far from accomplished. The are we maked

<sup>5.</sup> Arjun Appadural, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy' in Mike Featherstone (ed.), Global Culture. London, Sage, 1990.

# Politics and personal reform

NASIR TYABJI

THERE is no doubt that, whether the question is one of the reform and codification of the personal laws of a specific religious community, or of critical changes in laws regulating social welfare, such as adoption. Muslims as a bloc have been seen to be the insuperable obstacle. This sort of perception is only to be expected of Hindu communalists. What is more depressing is that it is also implicit in the philosophy of 'let the community move at its own pace', shared by many liberal and radical secularists. Of course, it arises from the realization that the most vociferous advocacy of a uniform civil code comes from aggressive proponents of Hindutva; and is an attempt by such secularists to distance their own position from the element of compulsion inherent in the communal threat. But the fact of the matter remains that the 'Muslim' leadership is perceived to be the vehicle through which personal law reform must originate.

If personal or civil law does indeed cover the areas of marriage, divorce, maintenance, adoption, succession and inheritance, then it is an outrageous suggestion that the only instrument of change can be the leadership of a religious community. This principle was not followed either in the case of the

codification of Hindu personal law, nor in the discussion leading to the enactment of the 1954 Special Marriage Act.<sup>1</sup>

Most of what needed to be said and debated on the legal issues of the introduction of a secular civil code was completed at least 20 years ago. The experience since that time has shown, as Vasudha Dhagamwar has pointed out, that a major element in the strategy of moving towards such a code has been falsified. This lay in the presumption that a gradual process of codification of specific systems of personal law would lead to their eventual unification in a relatively socially painless way.

<sup>1.</sup> In fact, the legitimacy of the religious lead/rship in matters concerning secular affairs stems from the politics of vertical n obilization, first encouraged by the Fritish in their attempt to divide the national movement. It was reinforced by the interest group' principle of representation in legislatures and even in the Constituent / ssen bly, where 'Muslims' were seen as such an interest group Since 1957, originally with the need for the Congress to scramble together an anti-communist alliance in the Kerala Assembly with the help of the Muslim League, it has been a guiding principle of all political formations at the central government keel, not excluding the Janata Dal in the 1991 elections.

<sup>2.</sup> Indian Law Institute (1972) and (1978); Mahmood (1975) and (1977).

The Shah Bano case has changed all that.3 More importantly, the debate amongst Muslims which might have been generated under the compulsions of the Shah Bano case was pre-empted by the Congress's clear indication of preference for the traditionalist point of view. It is unlikely that a similar opportunity will arise again, when the ferment created by a specific situation forces the issue of Muslim personal law into public debate. Upendra Baxi has suggested that reformists amongst Muslims should engage the traditionalists in debate and eventual consensus on changes in personal law. It would seem, on the experience of the Shah Bano case, that this is not feasible, at least in a climate of vertical political mobilization.4

he debate about Muslim personal law reform began in the early 1960s, at seminars held under the auspices of the Delhi session of the International Congress of Orientalists (1964), the Institute of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies (1968) and at Aligarh about the same time. Although the Aligarh seminar was noticeably tilted towards the orthodox view, there does not appear to have been much organized opposition until 1971. In that year, the Muslim Satyashodak Mandal organized a Muslim Women's Conference in Pune which passed a resolution asking for changes in personal laws, leading to a uniform civil code. Not only were women represented at the conference but some, at least, appear to have been drawn from the urban and rural poor, relatively less influenced by (and wary of) the fundamentalist forces.6

The reaction, however, was swift and overwhelming. The Jamaat-e-Islami organized a series of counterconferences of 'devout' women not only in Pune, Bombay, Parbhani and Amravati in Maharashtra, but also at Hyderabad, Lucknow, Kanpur and some other cities. A seminar at the Indian Law Institute in January 1972, arrived at a moderate consensus that there was a definite need for reforms in Muslim personal law, the reforms to be based on Islamic texts This was followed by two conventions of increasing orthodoxy which ended in a statement declaring the personal law to be immutable.7 The presumption is that no genuine women's representatives were invited to these latter seminars. During the rest of the 1970s and early 1980s, there was a barrage of representations from the orthodoxy against any attempt to alter personal laws whenever major political changes took place in the country, and the stalemate continued up to the time of the Shah Bano judgement in 1985.8

pposition to changes in personal law has been a feature of conservative political or religious opinion amongst all faiths, before and after independence. However, while women prominent in the All India Women's Conference were able to influence the government into passing laws to codify the Hindu personal laws in the 1950s, the strategy of vertical mobilization prevented any progress on a uniform system of personal laws. In other words,

women born Hindu could be accepted to speak on behalf of Hindus, but not on behalf of all Indians in their role as women.

As has been mentioned earlier, vertical mobilization is taking place even today. What has considerably complicated the situation is the growth of militant Hinduism-asnationalism, basing itself both on an aggressive assertion of its inherent rights as Hindus and a denouncement of the 'rights' of religious minorities. It is then genuinely difficult to distinguish, in the reaction of Muslims to issues of personal law, the proportions of an ingrained conservatism, and the natural defensiveness of a minority community which feels itself humiliated. The reactions of women become yet more complex under these multiple forces of subordination.

However, one thing is clear. The struggle for emotional and physical security, let alone the reassertion of secular and democratic values, cannot be undertaken by Muslim women (or men) by a mobilization along a religious demarcation. The communal threat can be met only in combination with secular and democratic forces. The general realization that all personal laws are detrimental to women, that the secular civil code is primarily a women's issue, seems to have been one of the few positive outcomes of the Shah Bano controversy.10 In other words, Muslims (or any other group of followers of a faith) do not form a 'community' in matters of marriage, divorce, maintenance, adoption, succession and inheritance. Women form a clear point of opposition to the existing system of personal laws, an identifiable horizontal focus for mobilization.

This threat was clearly perceived by the traditional Muslim leadership during the Shah Bano case controversy. They redefined the issue in terms of an un-Islamic state's depredations on the personal law of the community, and helped considerably by the Hindu com-

<sup>3</sup> In my hands, I have a copy of the 'Islamic Civil Code' proposed by the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind. With a sprinkling of crude anti-colonialisms (not surprisingly the Jamaat's literature shares this feature with the RSS), the booklet is a classic example of archaic thought

<sup>4.</sup> Upendra Baxi, 'Muslim Law Reform, Uniform Civil Code and the Crisis of Commonsense' in Mahmood (1975). This together with Madhu Kishwar's 'Pro-Women or Anti-Muslim'. The Shah Bano Controversy' in Desai (1990), is the best introduction to the issues in personal law reform.

<sup>5.</sup> Mahmood (1977)

<sup>6.</sup> The convention was organized by the Marathi novelist Hemid Dalwai

<sup>7.</sup> Mahmood (1977).

<sup>8.</sup> Dhagamwar (1979) notes, along with Madhu Kishwar in Desai (1990), that the Shah Bano case was the third prominent judgement in favour of maintenance to separated Muslim women Kishwar and Nera Desai (in the same volume) take note of the unnecessarily pejorative descriptions of the legal position of women in Islam in the Supreme Court judgement which may have given a handle to Islamic fundamentalists. In Parliament, the communal approach was not, of course, confined to the Bip See Seema Muslafa's description of K C Pant's speech in the Lok Sabha in the course of discussion of the Muslim Women's Bill. Mainstream XXIV (1986), 37, 17 May 1986

<sup>9</sup> Aparna Basu and Bharati Ray. Women's Struggle: A History of the All India Women's Conference 1927-1990 (Manohar, New Delhi: 1990) pp. 46-54.

<sup>10.</sup> The articles in Desai (1990) contain critiques of the law applicable to women born Christian, as well as a realistic assessment of customary practices prevailing in the treatment of Hindu women.

munalists, managed to convince many of the educated of their point of view. However, of the 118 (Muslim) signatories to the demand that maintenance provisions to separated women under Section 125 of the CR.P.C. should continue to be applicable to Muslim women, there were as many as 73 men (with 45 women).11

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The campaign (by the Committee) for the Protection of Rights of-Muslim Women) was spontaneous and lacked organizational sweep and reserves. Raiiv Gandhi's reported remark that the presence of a single Maulvi would increase the credibility. of the committee which, he claimed, consisted entirely of unrepresentative modern women, epitomized the vertical mobilization approach of the government. In the event, the counter-campaign to the Shah Bano judgement by the official Muslim 'representatives' in the Congress did gain some support amongst sections of urban Muslims.

A his leads naturally to the major issue that the history of personal law reform raises: the identification of groups, apart from the intelligentsia, which can be mobilized in support of social change in general, and a secular civil code in particular.12 70% of Muslims live in the rural areas and are largely small or marginal farmers or self-employed in non-agricultural occupations. Of the Muslims in the urban areas, 80 to 85% are 'skilled workers, tailors, retailers, petty businessmen, small manufacturers or are engaged in traditional industries like bidi-making, perfumery, block making etce-

TABLE 1

Distribution of Population by Occupation of Household

| (Percentages)          |   |                            |                        |              |                         |                      |       |  |
|------------------------|---|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------|--|
| -<br>-<br><sup>1</sup> | Self-employed<br>in Agricultural<br>Occupations | Non-Agricultural<br>Labour | Agricultural<br>Labour | Other Labour | Regular Wage/<br>Salary | Casual Labour Others | Total |  |

| " Rural | 36.3        | 21.2 | 24.4 | 9.9 | <b>—</b> '. |      | 8.1 | 100.0 |
|---------|-------------|------|------|-----|-------------|------|-----|-------|
| Muslims | - ,         |      |      |     |             |      |     |       |
| Urban   | <del></del> | 53.4 |      |     | 28.9        | 13.4 | 4.2 | 100.0 |
|         | 42.8        | 12.8 | 27.8 | 8.4 |             | ,—   | 8.1 | 100.0 |
| Indians |             | •    |      |     |             |      |     |       |
| Urban   | _           | 38.9 |      | _   | 43.6        | 12.1 | 5.2 | 100.0 |

Source · Government of India (1990), Tables 27U and 27R Note : Columns may not add upto 100 due to exclusion of non-responses

TABLE 2

Distribution of Persons by Size Class of Land Cultivated by Household

| Size class of land    | Percentage of |             |  |  |  |
|-----------------------|---------------|-------------|--|--|--|
| cultivated (hectares) | Muslims       | All Indians |  |  |  |
| 0.00                  | 34.7          | 29.2        |  |  |  |
| 0.01 - 1.00           | <b>4</b> 2 0  | 36.0        |  |  |  |
| 1.01 - 2.01           | 12:9          | 15.8        |  |  |  |
| Above 2.01            | 10.5          | 19.1        |  |  |  |

Source: Government of India (1990). Table 23R

tera'.13 The high proportion of rural Muslim households may come as a surprise, but the occupation of the urban households is in line with the general perception.

Thus the majority of Muslims, like other Indians, live in the rural areas (their conditions of life will be discussed a little later). Amongst the 80 to 85% of the urban population who are in one way or another associated with small business or manufacture lies the financial support for the Jamaat-e-Islami. Theodore Wright has analyzed advertising support for the biennial special issue of the Jamaat's English weekly, Radiance. Almost half the advertisers were involved in the leather, hardware and clothing trades.14 Significant amongst other

businesses were bidis, automotive and electrical spares, rubber and plastic goods, hotels and restaurants, publishing, pharmacies and patent medicines. The location of the advertisers is also interesting in its distribution. Almost three-quarters were located in the four metropolitan cities and in Hyderabad, with 15% more from UP as a whole.

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The most obvious feature of these advertisers is, of course, that trade predominates. 15 Even those engaged in processing (leather, bidis) play little role in organizing production, a role critical to a manufacturer proper. This distinction, between a middleman and an effective controller of production, which is important in political economy, has a role in terms of the process of secularization. It is significant that the handloom and powerloom weavers of western and northern India

<sup>11.</sup> Incidentally, 29 of the men and 19 of the women were academics, substantially from JNU and Aligarh. A further 24 (16 men and 8 women) came from the media. There is a useful documentation of the widespread opposition amongst Muslims to the Muslim Women's Pill in HA Gani, Reform of Muslim Personal Law (Deep and Deep, New Delhi: 1988) pp. 85-116, 159.

<sup>12.</sup> From a survey (confined to Muslim men) conducted in 1970, it was made clear that the bulk of respondents wished the officially sponsored leadership to stay clear of politics and to concentrate on the economic issues affecting the community. Gopal Krishna, 'Indian Muslims in the Nation—Formation Process' in his edited book, Contributions to South Asian Studies 2 (Oxford University Press, Delhi: 1982).

<sup>13.</sup> N C Saxena, 'Public Employment and Educational Backwardness among the Muslims in India' in Shakir (1989). The author is a civil servant unusual in his knowledge of the genuine problems of the minorities in north India.

<sup>14.</sup> Wright (1984) Mattison Mines confirms the leather industry's support to the Jamaat in Ahmad (1976).

<sup>15.</sup> Wright, in fact, refers to the advertisements in Radiance as an index of mercantile activity.

| Female Education Rates |             |                      |                          |         |        |           |                     |       |  |
|------------------------|-------------|----------------------|--------------------------|---------|--------|-----------|---------------------|-------|--|
|                        |             | Not literate         | Literate &below primary. | Primary | Middle | Secondary | Graduate &<br>above | Total |  |
| Muslims                | Rural       | 76.1                 | 13.1                     | 6.9     | 3.0    | 0.8       | 0.0                 | 100.0 |  |
| WI USTIMA              | Urban       | <b>5</b> 9. <b>5</b> | 18.5,                    | 11.4    | 5.4    | 4.3       | 0.8                 | 100.0 |  |
|                        | Rural       | 74.1                 | 12.1                     | 7.8     | 3.9    | 1.9       | 0.3                 | 100.0 |  |
| All Indian             | us<br>Urban | 44.1                 | 17.4                     | 14.5    | 9.7    | 10.2      | 3.8                 | 100.0 |  |

Source: Government of India (1990), Table 31.4

TABLE 4

| Per Capita Consumption Levels            |                      |                        |                      |                      |  |  |  |
|--|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--|--|--|
| Household monthly per capita expenditure | Percen<br>Mus        | persons All Indians    |                      |                      |  |  |  |
| in rupees                                | Urban                | Rural                  | Urban                | Rural                |  |  |  |
| Ûpto 110<br>110 - 215<br>Above 215       | 22.0<br>51.6<br>26.6 | 35.1 ·<br>50.5<br>14.6 | 14.3<br>44.0<br>41.7 | 35.5<br>47.6<br>16.8 |  |  |  |

Source: Government of India (1990), Tables 25U and 25R Note: Non-responses are included in the highest income bracket

seem to have little representation in the Jamaat's financial support base: Similarly, the brassware interests in Moradabad and the lock makers in Aligarh seem to have kept aloof from the Jamaat, at least up to the 1980s. Sections of small businessmen who have evolved from artisans are likely to have a basis of consciousness distinct to those from trading backgrounds.

If Muslims do not form a community in the matter of personal laws (women's interests are distinct to men's), still less do they form one in relation to aspects such as modes of employment and conditions of living. Tables I and 2 show the distribution of persons by household occupation, and the distribution of land cultivated by the household in the rural areas. Perhaps the most important point is that the distribution of the Muslim population in the rural areas is not exceptionally

different from that of the overall population. Though they are certainly more concentrated in nonagricultural self-employed occupations (21% as compared to 13%). Ninety per cent of agriculture-based households are either agricultural workers or small and marginal farmers. Female education amongst Muslims in rural areas is not noticeably different to the norm (Table 3), Horizontal forms of mobilization and, equally important, alternative leadership, may be achieved relatively easily in the rural areas,17

The contrast is greater in the urban areas. Here over half the Muslim population is self-employed, as much as 15 percentage points more than the proportion for the entire population. Conversely, those Muslims on a regular wage or salary (the working class and the middle class together) are 15 percentage points less in proportion to

the overall population. Even within the 30% of urban Muslims who are on a regular wage or salary, there is likely to be a very small proportion of the middle class, the bulk being accounted by the working class. There may, of course, be regional variations in these proportions. The important point is that isolation, in terms of objective conditions for mobilization can affect as much as 53% of self-employed Muslims in the urban areas. It must be presumed that this isolation is more complete in the case of women. However, a distinction should be made between self-employment in household production and that in more public spaces.

■ hese general observations may, of course, be substantiated by anthropological studies. Women fruit and vegetable sellers, washerwomen and conservancy workers may then be shown to 'shun' purdah, either in a literal sense or in terms of remaining in seclusion at home.18 However, the point hardly needs to be pressed. Almost three-quarters of urban Muslims (15 percentage points more than the proportion for Indians as a whole) subsist at a consumption level of Rs 200 per month (Table 4). Eighty-six per cent of rural Muslims (3 percentage points more than the entire population) manage to survive at the same level.

At income levels such as these, lack of participation of women (or men) in income earning occupations is certainly due to the lack of opportunities for work. In urban areas female Muslims are appreciably more educationally backward. To this backwardness has then to be added all the authoritarian pressures that are peculiar to the lives of the hard-pressed urban poor. However, studies do show that a number of urban working Muslim women, though quite well aware of the logic of their situation, are amazingly militant and organizable.19

<sup>16</sup> For an interesting case, see AR Momin's description in Ahmad (1978) of the difference between the artisal momins and the trade-based and landlord Konkan's in the I hiwandi powerloom industry.

<sup>17.</sup> Cf. Salved (1979) for the rural social origins of the present orthodox leadership.

<sup>18.</sup> See, for example, Hasan Ali, 'Elements of Caste among the Muslims in a District in Southern Bihar' in Ahmad (1978)

<sup>19.</sup> See Niesha Z Haniff, Muslim Women and the Minority Mentality in Ahmad (1983).

The point, then, is that there is a minute proportion of Muslims, women even less than men, whose conditions of existence allow the intrusion of orthodox injunctions (insistence on purdah and prohibition of legally enforceable maintenance) into their lives, even if they considered them valid. The candidature of women in the February 1991 District Council elections in Kerala has shown that where it is clear that communal forces are not the inspiration for radical changes in the political or social space, Muslim women are prepared to go against the orthodox opinion, to stand for election and to campaign vigorously.21

Progress towards a uniform civil code is linked, as the history of the Hindu Code Bill itself shows, to movements opposed to vertical mobilization. Further steps can only take place in India when women of the minorities are confident of a situation where they are not led to believe that they will be letting down their co-religionists when they support other women against the politics of religious personal laws. Their conditions of existence, particularly in the rural areas, show that there can be no barrier purely in terms of their occupations (or their religion) to their participating in general agrarian mobilization. It is this that would, of itself, develop a leadership able to instil in them a confidence that neither their livelihoods nor the genuine aspects of their faith are under attack.

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<sup>20.</sup> The epistemological debate between Robinson (1983, 1986). Das (1984) and Minault (1984) is also a political debate about how far Indian Muslims as a bloc can be expected to move towards greater orthodoxy.

<sup>21.</sup> It another context, orthodoxy's admission of the relevance of secular mobilization is seen in the Shahi Imam's reported remark that although cri(w) cadres did not believe in God, they were good people'. Without wishing to overemphasize the point, it is important to appreciate the significance of the admission of this novel category. Pradip Datta et 'al., 'Understanding Communal Violence: Nizamuddin Riots', Economic and Political Weekly, XXV (1990), 45.

## Reconsidering education

S. SHUKLA

OVER 40 years after himself commencing teaching, why should this son of a dedicated teacher be reconsidering education? Is it because, as the wag said, 'Those who can, do -those who cannot, teach.' And perhaps those who cannot even teach, teach teachers! In doing so and in teaching the teachers of teachers, one is called upon to reflect repeatedly and deeply on what education is and what it does. Living in a real world, one is also confronted with what it is not and what it cannot do and what the so many other processes in the society, economy and polity—revolutions, family socialization, communication and the rest-accomplish. All this makes one not just rethink education i.e. design it differently or plan how to impart it better, but to ask the question: Is it a valid or an effective process at all? Does any real education take place? Do the processes and agencies we call

\*This piece is offered to Seminar as a tribute to the memory of Raj Thapar who had asked me to write a poser on education and development almost a quarter of a century ago, and of Ron-esh, who consented to deliver the Foundation Day address on my request at the Central Institute of Education, Delhi, in what tragically turned out to be the last year of their lives. The article is a synopsis of my lecture in the Silver Jubilee year of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla at the India International Centre, New Delhi.

education (or educational) really educate?

In the very beginning it is necessary to clear up one or two matters of meaning and bias or value, and perspective or vantage point. Meaning first. There is a broad meaning which can include the socialization process in all areas—in the family, in peer groups and in the workplace or the polity. But there is a more restricted, even narrow meaning which covers only what goes on in the confines of the institution called school which in its generic sense would include the university, and the technical/professional institutions. For purposes of clarity it is desirable to use the narrow meaning. There is another axis along which one runs into a distinction viz., education as the outcome of all that happens to humans or as that which is deliberately designed as education to influence or shape the individual. Again, it is more useful and practical to choose the latter. Finally, there is the distinction between counting as education. only that which has a positive value (positive for whom and in what manner?) as against the entire range of change in man. In this, I make no choice, at least for now.

And a certain statement of bias or value is also appropriate at this stage. I came to teaching after a spell of some pre- and post-Independence political work—after, in fact, seeing both the successful culmina-

tion, such as it was, of the struggle for Independence and the failure of the communist effort at revolution immediately thereafter.

he limitations or otherwise of politics had not, in fact, dictated a resort to education. Education appeared a decent and hopefully, at least in the long run, effective thing to do. However, it has now been apparent for quite some time that in our country, there is a certain legitimacy that politics built up for itself. Science by itself had not, for example, come to the conclusion that modern industrialization was the road for Indian society. Although one can cite Prafulla Chandra Ray and to an extent Jagdish Chandra Bose as its protagonists, it is Nehru not C V Raman, it is the Indian national movement and not our intellectual system which held up the ideal of industrialization as our model for development. Even more striking is the case of democracy and adult franchise which was championed and brought into existence by the national political movement. The academia was strikingly ambivalent and reticent if not actually resistant or at least diffident.

Thus, in the experience of Indian society, it is the polity and not education which shaped the major ideals of national life. Symbolic of this is the convention which Indian Science Congress established of having Nehru inaugurate it year after year out of, one posits, a genuine respect for the leadership and direction which he was expected to offer, long before the ritual became routine tribute or obeisance to authority. Expressive, also, of the same situation is the large-scale development of government science through the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and the feebleness of opposition as, for instance, Meghnad Saha's to the secular, long-term weakening of the university system visa-vis government in science and, in fact, in general.

These are, however, merely individual or national historically conditioning predispositions which suggest an ineffective or secondary role for education. But they do throw up larger, basic questions.

Does education matter? Or make a difference? Does it merely accommodate itself in such space as the polity, economy etcetera leave open to it? Or does it even get basically shaped and structured by them?

- These are not new questions. But we need to answer them for our age and for our own specific culture or nation as well as in a more general context. If, as we have decided earlier, we do not use an all-inclusive definition of education, we find that it subsists in the space that the family or economy allows or vacates. For the very act of its coming into existence, it is dependent on them if not directly then certainly through default. This appears to be equally true of the changing character and orientation of education. Before we examine this relationship of (the micro-situation of) education with the macro-reality of society further, it may be useful to take a look at the micro-reality itself.

have for almost three decades now believed that there is a built-in tendency towards inertia in education.1 Others like Rudolph and Rudolph have later, though independently, characterized this as the genetic imprint2 of an educational system. Once initially established, the basic characteristics of educational situations, varying within limits as they do from culture to culture or even sub-culture to subculture, remain the same over time and survive many fairly major changes in the economy, polity etcetera. Noticeably for example, the Soviet pedagogical methods remained authoritarian and teacher - and textdominated long after the Soviet Revolution, notwithstanding Krupskalya's fascination with John Dewey's progressive education (he was depressed when he visited USSR) and her promotion of the Complex Method. Much British pedagogyand that in the Anglo-Saxon world in general remains more progressive', child-centred, despite prolonged Tory or Labour dominance in politics and culture. In India, the stranglehold of written examinations, mainly external, and the total dominance of teacher and text in the classroom continues to characterize educational methods inspite of over half a century of attempted reform.

L he explanation of this situation is easy, even if composed of a number of elements from many domains. Teaching is a craft which most of us teachers learn more by imitation, largely of the way we had been taught, than through any other means. This is so because our own experience as students is a memory in which we have remembered the teacher as successfully surviving, and able to fulfil at least some stated objectives viz., instilling some knowledge, some conduct and hopefully morals in the young. In any case, survival in the teaching situation is fundamental. No teacher can continue to teach if he/she is not able to hold his/her own. He cannot afford too often to say I do not know' when asked a question. Nor can he afford indiscipline, or even purposive work-oriented noise or apparent disorder. Possibly these can be kept within acceptable limits by a person of some ability who is able to command the respect of the students. It is not easy to find persons with this quality, and the number of teachers, required is very large. In any case, most societies seem to allocate resources and prestige to teaching at levels far short of what would make such availability practicable.

Improved styles and techniques in any field are promoted and encouraged through validated technology, or at least technology which is considered valid and authentic. Engineering technology, and to a lesser extent, medical technique rely on the physical and life sciences respectively for their continued validation and advancement even as they also have an independent basis in practice itself—in symbiosis or interdependent relationships with these basic sciences. The human sciences on which education would similarly rely are much more indecisively founded. The phenomenon of

<sup>1.</sup> In my 'Reconstructing Educational Theory' (Delhi, National Institute of Education Seminar, 1963, mimeo) and again in 'Educational Techniques and Educational Planning' in Educational Sciences II(1), Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1967.

<sup>2.</sup> Susan and Lloyd Rudolph (eds.) Politics and Education in India, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1968.

paradigm change—if not also of change of vogue—affects them much more severely and frequently. The variety of situations in which they operate is greater. The relationship of cause and effect and the possibility of prediction, is therefore correspondingly much less.

V hat is more, the human and social sciences as well as human and social processes such as education are also characterized by a more fundamental difference. The goals and values in this field are open to the widest contestation. Thus while there would be considerable agreement on what is good health or a good bridge or road, there would be very little on what is good conduct or good educationexcept perhaps, and I speak halfironically and half seriously herein the matter of good examination grades now and a good job or status or husband later. Endowed with a weaker or less firm basis and ridden with conflict or ambivalence, the loosely founded 'technology' (or craft) of education knows much less well how and where to go than do most other human endeavours.

It tends also to get much more affected by others' views of what it should be and do, than other fields. Thus few doctors are deterred by social taboos and prejudices. The most vegetarian and non-violent or Vaishnav amongst Hindus have, for instance, successively accepted sur-gery, termination of pregnancy etcetera over a period of time. And distinguished male gynaecologists have been acceptable in genderwise conservative communities. But the same degree of acceptance may not be available to the teacher who departs from formal book-dominated authoritarian instruction and resorts to apparently noisy and disorderly class procedures, or questions core social values Socrates and Derozio being cases in point.

which really illustrates the idea that while the teacher is too small a person and his armoury of tools too feeble for others to entrust the outcomes of education to his care; these others are all too well placed not to have a decisive voice in not only the goals but perhaps also the methods of education. This

is perhaps as it should be. For the outcome-and, therefore, perhaps also its methods, for the methods profoundly affect the outcomedeeply affect us all. But consider the contrast with some other human endeavours—technology or politics or business. It is as clear as can be today-if it was not almost a century ago-that environment is victim to advancing technology. And yet, aligned as it is with the profit of capital and power of the politically potent, the possibility of restraint on technology is much less, the practice of such restraint much harder and the prospect of its (technology) engulfing us all the more greater than education would ever be allowed. Such autonomy as education may possess is more the autonomy of its inertia than anything else, for perhaps this inertia fits in with most structures of power and domination-existing or emergent.

In recent decades, education has increasingly been brought under scrutiny—both by the rise of forces other than education seeking to supplant it and by the questioning gaze of thinkers. The rise of the media is only the latest and most noticeable of the former. How far the media themselves are influenced by the economy or power generally and, in non-Western societies by sheer Western chic is quite another matter. But the media do highlight the sidelining or displacement of education, indeed, assigning it a partial niche—and a diminishing niche at that—in the whole range of influences which constitute the broader definition of education as against the more restricted one for which we opted at the beginning. For it is indeed undeniable that individuals as well as their cultures and societies are formed at least as much by the economy, polity and the media as these are themselves influenced by education.

There are two further lines of thought we require to pursue in considering this situation of mutual causation in which organized education is increasingly assuming the position of only one of many formative influences and one which may be diminishing in influence or salience, and which may be assum-

ing even more the quality of a dependent variable.

Lo examine this matter in the third world perspective, we have to recognize some specific characteristics of our situation. Some countries did not have long traditions of literate cultures or extensive, wellestablished and even variegated structures of schooling (including higher learning). Others, like ours, had a wide variety of ages-long structures varying from the itinerant teacher's rudimentary instruction in petition writing or priest craft or accounting for land or trade, to belles lettres in the Persian school and the learned tols and madrasas of Sanskrit and Arabic. In all cases, the rise of the now dominant systems of schooling and higher learning institutionalized in universities, predominantly in a foreign language, implies the enforcement of a new regime on top of, and sometimes supplanting, an old one.

This is done by the momentum or force generated in economic, political and even military spheres. Once established in this manner, education does strengthen the tendency for those forces to be determining. But this establishes the basic mode of interaction between education and other spheres, a mode followed and reinforced by the experience, as we noted in the case of our own society at the very beginning, wherein it is not academia or education but the political struggle for freedom which helped to define the basic contours of society. Also, while the authority patterns of subordination to domination would be common to the original as well the emergent modes and also while to some extent, older elites would assume elite positions in the new order brought about under imperial domination, the resultant situation does produce major changes.

In intellectual and symbolic terms it marks a sharp break from the indigenous original and thus leads to discontinuity and disjunction. In social terms this leads to the decline of some old and the rise of many new elite groups. The consequence is a further weakening of education as compared to, for example, the European experience. Thus, unlike

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the European university which built on the traditional intellectual heritage of Graeco-Roman and Christian origins as well as the continuity and strengthening essentially of an already existing elite, the Indian university trained a new sub-elite out of some old and many new social elements.3 It helped perhaps to extinguish and/or tame the vigour of indigenous intellectual traditions. Institutionally, then, the Indian university became an examining, standardizing machinery subordinate to the cultural and political will of the alien state rather than a creative originator of new thought or ideas. The social mobility which is both effect and cause of the growth of this university and its feeder educational system helps to structure and form, institutionally as well as culturally, the intelligentsia associated with it.

It is necessary at this point to mention two powerful critics of education in recent times who remind us in different ways of Gandhi. Paulo Friere designed a pedagogy of the oppressed in which every word or theme which in teaching and learning or education—with such formal structure as it might possess in his method—would be related to (and, indeed emphatically and forcefully • remind the learners of the structures of domination and the need and possibility of struggle against, them. ... He called for education to work for · a new, different society which would : be without this domination and oppression. Gandhi had an alternative vision of society and laid down the broad guideline of work and community living as the educational basis of this new society. Hence the central position he accorded to work or labour in his basiceducation-even though he made no explicit mention of struggle.

Again Gandhi's rejection of the centralized structures of domination is echoed powerfully in Ivan Illich's thought generally and in his plea for deschooling society. Even as Illich accepts as given a much higher level of technological sophistication as the basis of his learning centres

where each individual would learn as he or she wishes-and he quite curiously fails to see the inconsistency of this level of technology with the deprofessionalized, almost amateur character of the providers of this service, teachers in the case of education—he goes strongly along Gandhi's lines in his critique of large centralized structures. However, professionals too, whether they be teachers or doctors, are his bete noire, not the traditionally recognized monopolists of economic or political or cultural power who seem to lurk somewhere in the background.

**B**oth Illich and Friere in different ways bring strikingly into view the failure of education's promise to liberate. But not on principle, as it were. They are critics of education as it, in their version, happens to be today—either oppressive or centralizing or alienating. But they still seem to engender hope, that education can be different, can liberate. The predominant forces and structure of economy, polity or culture are, in their view, looming in the background. They are not principal, determining decisive forces. Our own analysis has tended in a different direction. In our view, education does not seem to really matter in a basic sense. It is superstructure. not base. This, to some, is the conventional textbook Marxist position -determinist, and disarming the educator. Let us see how this checks with some more historical experience and with the way social science has viewed education.

Seventy years of socialist education in a highly organized socialist state did not succeed in creating a Socialist Man. Forty of another socialist state with a wholesale Cultural Revolution thrown in did not do it either. This need not necessarily invalidate either the concept of socialism or the prospect of a new (cooperative, non-acquisitive convivial) human being just as the failure of 40-odd years of education under our secular republic to produce noncommunal Indians does not validate communalism. But it does suggest that more prolonged and more durable processes and structures are at work than education as we have known it. The Vidya Bharatis and Saraswati Shishu Mandirs emerge long after the shakhas have built upon underlying deep structures of culture and society through intensive cultivation, just as tabligh follows Islam and the madrasas prosper in the wake of tabligh or other similar propagation of the faith.

At a more mundane level, at least for this society, it is easy to see that over four decades still did not suffice to carry schooling or literacy to all. The question of assessing its impact just does not arise for the major part of our society. And it is also not correct to argue, as is widely done, that this is because we do not allocate enough to mass education but divert it to higher. It is in the nature of this we', the makers of decisions and the owners of power and culture, to appropriate resources for ourselves and, in the context of the dependent situation we are in on a world plane, to operate an economy where almost half the people will be outside the pale of adequate nutrition or communication for making it either possible or desirable for them to acquire this schooling or literacy. So also is it in the nature of this 'we' to let education produce semi-processed manpower for the production systems of more prosperous economies. For this, the language, the culture and the regime of education perform a facilitating

At a theoretical level, too, it appears Durkheim's attributing to education the function of reproducing culture and society is a more valid description of what happens than the more optimistic transforming images of education, whether in Karl Mannheim who, recoiling from his experience of the Nazi use of education, sought to give it a transforming role or in John Dewey, who drawing on the more helpful experience of urbanizing and democratizing America, attributed to it a function of changing society. Nor, for that matter, can one take seriously the hopes of more recent new sociologists of education or neo- or cultural Marxists. Education, it seems, follows. It consolidates and extends changes registered elsewhere but does not initiate or originate them.

<sup>3.</sup> I have dealt with this more fully in 'The University in Indian Society' in The Journal of University Education, Delhi, March 1964.

# Financing education

JANDHYALA BG TILAK

EDUCATION in India has been in a turmoil. The Government of India had formulated a national policy on education in 1986. When the Congress government fell, one of the first things the Janata government did in 1989 was appoint a committee to review the national policy, under the chairmanship of Acharya Ramamurthy. Before the committee could finish its work, the government changed again, and the committee was asked to wind up its activities by the shortlived new government (of the Samajwadi Janata Party).

When the Congress again came into power in 1991, the government appointed another committee to review the work and recommendations of the Ramamurthy Committee. All this only shows up our shortsightedness and callousness in treating a long-term investment sector like education, which has not only 'longterm' implications for development. but also inter-generational effects on almost every dimension of human progress and economic and social development. It also shows how vulnerable a soft sector like education has been made to political vicissitudes, and interests of those in power.

This article discusses one important aspect relating to the education policy, viz., investment in education. Other, perhaps more important, aspects of the policy are deliberately kept outside its purview. It shows that there was no need to review the 1986 National Policy formulated by the Acharya Ramamurthy Committee, nor is there need now to review the committee's recommendations as far as financing education is concerned. Instead of acting on the agreed policies, we are delaying the whole process of properly investing in education. 1991 was typically characterized by these tactics.

The 1986 National Policy on Education underlined the importance of investment in education, and noted that 'the deleterious consequences of non-investment or inadequate investment in education are indeed very serious' (p. 28). It stated that education will be treated as a crucial area of investment for national development and survival, and also categorically promised to accord it high priority. At least four major points can be discerned from the Policy with regard to investment in education.

- (1) The Policy noted that the target set by the Kothari Commission and the National Policy on Education 1968 of investing 6% of national income on education could not be reached until 1986. Accordingly, it resolved in quantitative terms, that more than 6% of national income would be invested in education from the eighth five year plan onwards.
- (ii) Secondly, elementary education would be given relatively high priority; the Policy reiterated the provision of free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years.
- (itt) Thirdly, in the framework of centre-state financial relations, the Policy resolved that for the continuation of a 'meaningful partnership' between the centre and the states, the Union government would accept a larger responsibility.
- (iv) Lastly, the Policy stressed the need for mobilizing non-governmental resources for education. It also made a specific reference to technical and professional education and promised to devise a system that involves private and voluntary efforts in this sector.

These policy resolutions are clear, straightforward and without any ambiguity. As a result, the need for details in their implementation was not felt. This is reflected by the absence of any discussion on financing education in the Programme of Action that followed the National Policy. The importance of these provisions is hardly questioned. The Acharya Ramamurthy Committee on the Review of the National Policy on Education also did not raise any question on these issues. In fact, it seems to have clearly endorsed these provisions in the Policy. Yet little concrete achievement could be made.

The review committee did not come forth with any suggestions for policy changes. Instead, it repeated certain points and elaborated some others. Its suggestions are more relevant in the context of implementation of the Policy rather than for its revision or formulation. The following are its observations on the state of financing education in India:

- (a) Education has been treated as a residuary sector and given lower priority in matters of allocation.
- (b) The Kothari Commission (1966), the National Policy on Education 1968, as well as the National Policy 1986 have all recommended that the allocation for education should be more than 6% of national income. The share of education in GNP, which was 1.2% in 1950-51, reached 3.9% in 1986-87.
- (c) Though education has been in the concurrent list of the Constitution since 1976, it remains a primarily state activity. The contribution of the central government in financing education is small.
- (d) The percentage of total central and state plan expenditure devoted to education has been falling over the successive five year plans. There was only a marginal increase during the seventh plan.
- (e) The share of elementary education has come down from 56% in the first five year plan to 29% in the seventh plan. The share of secondary education remained somewhat stable. Higher education (university and college education) expanded over the years from 9% during the first five year plan to 22% in the fifth five year plan, although there was some reduction in the subsequent two five year plans.
- (f) The fee structure has virtually remained unchanged for the last four decades and educational development is dependent on availability of government resources.

ot many of these observations are new. In fact, in the Challenge of Education (Ministry of Education, 1985), which formed the background for the 1986 Policy, these aspects were more elaborately and systematically discussed.

Specifically, the review committee suggested some measures of mobilizing additional resources for education, which did not figure so explicitly in the Policy statement. The suggestions include making technical and professional education self-financing, increase in tuition and other fees including examination fees, introduction of student loans,

increase in investment in research by financial institutions like the banking sector, involving institutions like the Life Insurance Corporation and housing finance institutions, encouraging voluntary community contributions to education, revitalization of the educational cess scheme, and raising the scope for self-financing by higher educational institutions through consultancy, renting buildings, and some measures similar to tax on the brain drain, etcetera.

The review committee also suggested measures for improvement in financial management, such as removal of restrictions on the utilization and investment of surplus income of educational institutions. Lastly, the committee also suggested some cost economy measures, such as a multiple shift system, better teacher planning, and so on.

Let us now briefly review what has happened to the four major policy resolutions on investment in education during the last five years, a period characterized by political turmoil and instability, changes in the ruling political party at the centre and some states. Ex-ante, as no political party clearly opposed any of the provisions relating to investment in education made in the Policy, one expects somewhat smooth, if not rapid progress, on them. Experience proves otherwise.

The percentage of GNP invested in education is the most standard indicator of national efforts on development of education in any society. In India, this figure is around 3.5%. (An optimistic estimate that includes the contribution of local bodies, fees, endowments and donations, may be about 4.5% of GNP.) Among the world regions, including Africa, this figure is the lowest. Among the countries of the world on which such data are available, India ranks 115th with respect to this indicator (Unesco, 1990). Amongst the countries with a population of 10 crores or more, India figures at the bottom (except Bangladesh). No systematic or significant increase in this proportion during the post-1986 period can be noted.

Instead of pursuing this goal vigorously, it is shocking to find

that the government has been trying to subvert the definition and scope of the National Policy, misinterpret the letter and spirit of the Education — Commission's recommendations, and redefine the target to show that it has already been achieved and that — there is no need to worry about it (Kolhatkar, 1989). What a strategy to cover up our dismal failures! Redefine the concepts, misinterpret the facts, quantitatively underdefine the goals, boast of our pseudo-achievements and mislead the public! (Tilak, 1990).

TABLE 1

| Educati | ao | in | the | Five | Year | Plans   |   |
|---------|----|----|-----|------|------|---------|---|
|         |    |    |     |      | % 0  | of Tota | l |

| Five Year Plan         | Plan Expr. |
|------------------------|------------|
| First Five Year Plan   | 7.86       |
| Second Five Year Plan  | 5.83       |
| Third Five Year Plan   | 6.87       |
| Plan Holiday           | 4.60       |
| Fourth Five Year Plan  | 4.90       |
| Fifth Five Year Plan   | 3.27       |
| Sixth Five Year Plan   | 2.70       |
| Seventh Five Year Plan | 3.70       |

TABLE 2

| Education in the Five Year Plans |              |       | Intra-Sectoral Allocation (Percent) |       |       |       |  |  |
|----------------------------------|--------------|-------|-------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|--|--|
| Five Year Plan                   | Elem<br>Edn. | Adult | Secy<br>Edn.                        | Univ. | Tech. | Total |  |  |
| First Five Year Plan             | 56           | 3     | 13                                  | 9     | 13    | 100   |  |  |
| Second Five Year Plan            | 35           | 2     | 19                                  | 18    | 18    | 100   |  |  |
| Third Five Year Plan             | 34           | _     | 18                                  | 15    | 21    | 100   |  |  |
| Plan Holiday                     | 24           |       | 16                                  | 24    | 25    | 100   |  |  |
| Fourth Five Year Plan            | 30           | 1     | 18                                  | 25    | 13    | 100   |  |  |
| Fifth Five Year Plan             | 35           | 2     | 17                                  | 22    | 12    | 100   |  |  |
| Sixth Five Year Plan             | 30           | 4     | 25                                  | 18    | 11    | 100   |  |  |
| Seventh Five Year Plan*          | 29           | 6     | 16                                  | 12    | îî    | 100   |  |  |

TABLE 3

| Budget Provision | for Education | in India by | Levels | of Education |
|------------------|---------------|-------------|--------|--------------|
|------------------|---------------|-------------|--------|--------------|

|                    |         |         | -5 230.023 |                |         |
|--------------------|---------|---------|------------|----------------|---------|
|                    |         |         |            | 2s. in crores) |         |
|                    | 1985-86 | 1986-87 | 1987-88    | 1988-89        | 1989-90 |
| Plan               |         |         |            |                |         |
| Elementary         | 36.4    | 40.9    | 37.7       | 37.4           | 39.0    |
| Secondary          | 13.5    | 18.8    | 20.4       | 23.8           | 24.1    |
| Special Edn.       | 11.4    | 9.5     | 8.5        | 8.8            | 8.7     |
| Higher             | 19.8    | 16.8    | 14.5       | 12.3           | 11.2    |
| Other Edn. (Gen.)  | 2.6     | 2.4     | 3.9        | 6.3            | 5.3     |
| Technical Edn.     | 16.2    | 12.0    | 15.0       | 11.6           | 11.5    |
| Total              | 100.0   | 100.0   | 100.0      | 100.0          | 100.0   |
| Non-Plan           |         |         |            |                |         |
| Elementary         | 47.9    | 48.4    | 55.9       | 45.4           | 44.9    |
| Secondary          | 33.1    | 32.0    | 38.0       | 33.1           | 32.4    |
| Special Edn.       | 0.9     | 0.8     | 0.9        | 0.7            | 0.7     |
| Ĥigh <del>er</del> | 13.6    | 13.7    | 16.0       | 15.3           | 15.6    |
| Other Edn. (Gen.)  | 1.2     | 1.7     | 1.6        | 1.9            | 3.1     |
| Technical Edn.     | 3.4     | 3.4     | 3.4        | 3.6            | 3.3     |
| Total              | 100.0   | 100.0   | 100.0      | 100.0          | 100.0   |
| Total              |         |         |            |                | _       |
| Elementary         | 46.8    | 47.4    | 45.9       | 44.1           | 43.9    |
| Secondary          | 31.1    | 30.3    | 30.6       | 31.5           | 30.9    |
| Special Edn.       | 1.9     | 1.9     | 1.9        | 2.0            | 2.1     |
| Higher             | 14.2    | 14.1    | 13.7       | 14.8           | 14.8    |
| Other Edn. (Gen.)  | 1.3     | 1.8     | 1.7        | 2.6            | 3.5     |
| Technical Edn.     | 4.7     | 4.5     | 5.0        | 5.0            | 4.8     |
| Total              | 100.0   | 100.0   | 100.0      | 100.0          | 100.0   |

In the plans, the share of education declined consistently until the sixth five year plan (Table 1). During the seventh five year plan, however, a slight reversal in the declining trend can be seen. The share of the education sector in the total plan expenditure increased from 2.7% in the sixth plan to 3.7% in the seventh plan. This reversal, which is in fact a significant increase from Rs. 6,383 crores (original outlay) to Rs. 8,000 crores (actual anticipated expenditure) can be attributed to the emphasis laid on education in the National Policy. However, in real terms (after adjusting for increase in prices) the increase is not that significant.

he Constitutional Directive of providing universal elementary education to all has been frequently postponed. From the originally set date of 1960, it has now been shifted to 1995. But it is doubtful whether this goal can be achieved even by the turn of the century. Despite repeatedly resolving in its favour, after the first five year plan, elementary education never received more than one-third of total plan resources meant for education. The priority given to it in the seventh five year plan is lower than that accorded to it in the fifth five year plan (Table 2). Between 1985-86 and 1989-90, the share of elementary education in the total (plan plus non-plan) expenditure declined from 46.8% to 43.9% as against the share of higher education, which increased from 14.2% to 14.8% (Table 3). Incidentally, secondary education also did not benefit. Had the priority given in the first five year plan to elementary education been continued in the later plans, the problem of universalization of elementary education would not have been as difficult as it now appears to be.

After the education sector was brought into the concurrent list, the share of education in the central budget declined from 2.3% (1976-77) to 1.5% (1985-86). During the post-1986 period, it (slightly different but comparable figure) increased from 1.3% (1986-87) to 1.8% (1989-90). However, in the total educational finances, the centre's share

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increased from 7.1% (1985-86) to 11.6% (1989-90). The share of the centre is more important in the case of plan expenditure than in the case of non-plan expenditure. Its share in the former was as high as 50% in 1987-88, but it declined to 40% in the following year and to 37% by the end of 1990.

The relative contribution of nongovernmental resources, comprising students' fees, voluntary donations, endowments, etcetera declined steeply during the post-independence period. This is true with respect to fees and other private donations and endowments. This is also true with respect to the total education sector, and higher education in particular.

Pees per pupil declined in real terms at every level of education, including higher education. The share of fees in the costs of education also declined quite significantly. Fees per pupil in higher professional education are less than in general higher education. In relative terms. professional education is more highly subsidized than even secondary education. In higher education, the fee forms about 20% of the total costs (net fee: 17%). Also, the fee burden is unevenly distributed: in relative terms, students in Arts and Science courses pay higher fees; students in Business Management pay much less. The net fee is negative in Medicine.

Even though family expenditure on education declined in absolute terms, it is nevertheless substantial in relation to government expenditure on education in India, as also in relation to government expenditure. in other countries (Tilak, 1991). We do not have any evidence on these aspects relating to the post-1986 period. Though the Policy noted the need to mobilize additional resources from the community and other non-governmental sources, and though the Acharya Ramamurthy Committee mentioned in detail several such strategies, it should benoted that the potential of thesesources to contribute to expenditure on education cannot be very- significant, and hence they cannot be reliable sources of financing education.

To sum up, there seems to be little disagreement over issues relating to public financing of education in India, that were raised in the 1986 Policy or by the Acharya Ramamurthy Committee. It is a different matter that some crucial issues, such as privatization of education, were not raised at all. The Ramamurthy Committee dwelled at length on various alternative methods of financing education. There may not be much disagreement on the need and the rationale of these suggestions, but debate is certainly needed on the methodologies of implementing some of them, such as increase in fees (including discriminatory pricing), introduction of effective student loans, graduate taxes and so on. The crucial question is how to implement them, taking care that equity and efficiency do not suffer (see Tilak and Varghese, 1991 for details). This will require both political will and administrative skills.

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# As Doordarshan approaches doomsday

AMITA MALIK

FIRST there was Jawaharlal Nehru. Soon after Independence, he said All India Radio must become a corporation, 'something like the BBC'. And then there was Indira Gandhi. She said, naturally during the Emergency: 'Credibility? What is credibility? AIR and Doordarshan are government media and will remain government media. And then there was L K Advani. After the Emergency, the Janata government certainly swept away some of the cobwebs. Which is why we now have reasonably lively election broadcasts. He also set up the BG Verghese committee to recommend how to free the media from government meddling at every step and how to give them autonomy. They claim that they did not have time to implement their promise, while others say they plain reneged on it.

And then there was Rajiv Gandhi. When asked at the Press Club in Washington during his early 21st century Prince Charming days, about autonomy for the Indian media, he humiliated the people of India by saying in front of the international press that they (the people of India) were not yet ready for autonomy. However, being basically a 21st century man, during his last days he saw the ominous satellites coming. And he said in unequivocal terms that if Doordarshan were to survive, it must move with the times because India was going to be swamped by foreign telecasts. If not actually an election promise, his political heirs treated it as his last will and testament and made that now famous promise of a time-limit for allowing some sort of privatization of the media to make them less

of a monopoly and more competitive, although they still do not admit that AIR and DD are under any sort of threat from the foreign satellite invasion.

On second thoughts, Indira Gandhi seems to have been the most honest of the lot. Because although political parties in India keep on making all sorts of promises during electioneering and before they come to power, once they taste blood and go on the idiot box and make waves on All India Radio, they use the media to project first, themselves, then their party and lastly their government with the same shamelessness as the previous government they criticized so severely for doing exactly the same thing.

Mowever, it is not only election promises. Every government has set up a grand committee or a commission and then almost totally ignored its finding. First there was the Chanda Committee, then the Verghese Committee (although they called it a working group and they worked hardest of all), then the P C Joshi Committee and now, last and definitely the least, the Varadan Committee. And all these interspersed with other little groups and committees which have, between them, covered about everything under the sun concerning autonomy, freedom, the lot. But to date nothing, but absolutely nothing, has been done to give AIR and DD even a semblance of what one minister fancifully called 'functional autonomy'. And this fact is all the more depressing because, judging by what has happened and what has been discussed widely during 1991, we should by now rightly have been on the threshold of the Great Media Revolution. And well before the 21st century.

For the three most significant developments during the year, without doubt, are the increasing variety of alternatives presented to the Indian viewer by foreign satellite channels and local cable invasions; the government stirring itself in a sort of a way to make TV a little more competitive by appearing, repeat, appearing to allow the private sector to compete (all in the Varadan Committee recommendations, of which more later) so as to give

the viewer a wider choice as well as offer some competition to the so-called cultural invasion of India by satellite. And, last but not the least, the decision to telecast the proceedings of Parliament, in however sanitized and sterilized a form.

Of the three, I shall tackle the third first because, in my view, it is the only real achievement of the year. It has been a comparatively fast decision, considering how even the Western democracies, notably Britain, dithered over telecast of Parliament for something like 12 years and then succumbed to public pressure. The British Parliament and other enlightened democracies have almost as many provisos as ours, but whereas Japanese viewers have seen their elected representatives come to blows, we are unlikely to see anything of the sort and are fobbed off with only Question Hour. And we cannot blame Doordarshan because the censorship (they call it editing, of course) of our Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha proceedings is done by the Parliament secretariat itself and Doordarshan can comfortably sit back and just look after the technicalities.

But here, initially, as we started with the Lok Sabha we had slightly more sophisticated and alert MPs and ministers who did not need much editing because they not only dressed for the cameras but also spoke for the cameras. But once the Rajya Sabha Question Hour came into the picture, it became much more like the reports on Parliament we get in the press: noisy, everyone speaking at the same time, hardly one or two members who remembered there was a mike, let alone knew how to use it. The shouting and screaming were incredible. Are these the senior legislators who are often the final arbiters of our destiny, the wise elders whose every word should be studded with dignity and sobriety? The exposure has been not only eye-opening but horrifying. The voters will now know what they are up against. As for the legislators, if they are watching themselves in action, one can only hope it will have a sobering effect.

And so we come to satellite Tv. The rate at which it is spreading must have goaded on the government to recognize reality and for Minister Ajit Panja to say they were not going to try to stop the invasion (what is known as making a virtue of necessity). But the Secretary of the Ministry went one better and said government was not bothered by all this, because satellite TV was 'confined to the city elite, and the real India lives in the villages'. Well, had the good gentleman bothered to drive through some rural areas of Madhya Pradesh, as this columnist did on the way to a game sanctuary, he would have noticed quite a few dish antennae which, on enquiry, turned out to be very much foreign-orientated and not for the dubious distinction of picking up Doordarshan. Intrepid reporters, including one of DD's own correspondents, covering the first days after the Uttarkashi earthquake were equally startled to find dish antennae in remote Himalayan villages picking up foreign channels.

And all this before the Hindi invasion has really started. Indian investors, NRIs, our neighbouring countries which already have big ideas, not to speak of the BBC, are soon going to flood the country with programmes in Hindi and other Indian languages. And that is when DD will realize that it is too late to bolt the stable door, because the horse has already fled. And what is more, long before the new Russian Revolution and the decay of communism in Eastern Europe, I found most of the East European countries with community dishes on ' their blocks of flats hooked on to Western satellite TV. They were watching everything from The Forsythe Saga to strip-tease on a choice of channels. Their own little political revolutions had a good deal to do with getting democratic ideas through satellite TV. And who knows what can happen in this country? Already the Raiva Sabha proceedings would have given voters a fair assessment of the calibre of our legislators. Their exposure to how democracy (including the media) operates in other countries will open their eyes even further.

I wonder how many people remember that when the telecast of

Pakeeza caused a stampede across the border in Pakistan, its politicians made a huge hue and cry about India's 'cultural invasion' of their pure skies. Does the Indian government's reaction to foreign satellites being beamed to India not indicate that they are falling into exactly the same trap? Well, they cannot do anything about it either, except see the writing on the wall and try to offer some healthy competition. And they can do that only if they throw open the Indian screens (and satellites) to talent other than Doordarshan's bureaucrats. Not to forget the well-known and widespread corruption which dogs their choice of films, serials and even the moonlighting in which they blatantly indulge.

And that is precisely what the Varadan Committee was supposed to do, suggest suitable alternatives to DD's monopoly and woo Indian viewers back to home base. Unfortunately, the right headline for the Varadan Report would be: 'Eating Your Cake and Having It'. Because what it gives away with one hand, it takes away with the other. Those lofty sentiments voiced at the beginning, and I shall quote some of them, lose all meaning when typical government provisos come in and make it quité clear that, one way or another, government will still be calling the shots. Ironically enough, the full name of the committee is: 'Inter-Departmental Committee on Introducing Competition in the Electronic Media'. It starts off, alas, with a rosy picture of what the media alreadyloffer. The two media very often in the day hook up (sic) the entire nation to a feast of classical' music, an illuminating talk, an engaging play or the speech of the Head of the Nation.' Strange, but the officials who constituted the committee must be very avid listeners and viewers to have discovered such gems, because professional media watchers like this writer seem to have missed them entirely. And mercifully we do not have to watch the speech of the head of the nation every day.

As for the foreign TV stations by satellite, it concedes: 'While the relevance of these programmes...as they are presently telecast may be

questioned, this development has disturbing implications...' They also concede that with their vast resources these foregin organizations are 'able to telecast some visually very impactful programmes such as live coverage of sports events and onthe-spot and imaginative coverage of a highly topical event such as the Gulf War or the attempted coup in USSR'. So what they question is 'the highly glamorous entertainment programmes...somewhat irrelevant to the ethos of an Indian viewer'. Presumably the Bombay glossies such as Chitrahar and the pure kitsch dished out by DD's central production unit are not capable of fighting all this. They also concede that 'a single official channel for news is...singularly inadequate'. Yet, they anticipate that, 'In the Indian context, broadcasting rights in the hands of unscrupulous elements could lead to very undesirable effects on the society.

They also question the ability of advertisers to sustain 'all these new channels'. In fact, they even anticipate that 'these channels may fall into the hands of unscrupulous and anti-national elements'. One might well ask: Such as? And also, why would government, which will hold the reins, not be able to detect undesirable elements or assume that there are no desirable, national-minded people in the private sector? And in India itself?

So, having condemned, all foreign channels out of hand and attributing their attractions only to vast resources which might contaminate Indian culture which has survived for thousands of years and having equally questioned the hong fides of those sections of the Indian private sector which might conceivably offer better competition to foreign telecasters than dear old Doordarshan, the Varadan Committee goes singlemindedly about the business of hedging in everything and everyone, mostly with self-destroying conditions which make a mockery of freedom of expression, creativity (which is even more important) and truly competitive telecasting and broadcasting.

For instance, why should the eligibility criteria include the condition that 'the applicant company must be a "Public Limited Company" whose shares are listed in the stock market? Yet when it comes to universities and cooperative trusts etcetera, which I am told were the contribution of B G Verghese to the final document, there seems to be no proviso about their resources or their qualitative qualifications, so that we shall end up with more substandard stuff like most of the UGC telecasts. The same applies to shares on developmental programmes.

While application of the AIR and DD codes is not too harmful because they are by and large sound, why lay down a limit of 10% in terms of time of imported programmes? Also, while it is all very well setting up an autonomous body to assess the quality of programmes as well as to consider complaints, judging from past experience, if these bodies are to be hand-picked by government and include the usual socialites, politicians and others sympathetic to the government of the day, as witness the people in the Children's Film Society, including its fastchanging chairpersons, it will make a mockery of fairness and good judgement.

In fact, shorn of its trimmings, and taking into consideration the confusing overlapping of Prasar Bharati and the news measures, it looks as if the recommendations of the Varadan Committee are no more than old wine in new bottles. It is extremely unlikely that even if all these recommendations are put into effect at lightning speed, they will really offer any sort of real competition to either the quantitative or qualitative onslaughts of foreign media. To dismiss their programmes as an invasion of our cultural values would be as short-sighted as dismissing all those local applicants as anti-national if they do not toe the dreary government line.

In any case, it looks as if Door-darshan is speeding towards its ultimate fate: That of remaining the poor relation of international telecasting when it could be a full-fledged proud relation, given the talent and even the resources available and also the standards of excellence which are certainly not lacking in this country.

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# 'Science' and natural resource management

MAD'HAV GADGIL

HUMANS are, above all, tool-using animals. Chimpanzees, our nearest relatives, may occasionally break a twig and stick it into a termite mound to stir up some food; but they do not deliberately fashion tools for future use. The artefacts that humans fabricate have enabled them to inhabit a wider range of environments and put to use a vastly greater variety of natural resources than any other animal species. This has been possible, because, unlike other animals, humans are not restricted to 'here and now'. We conceive of nature near and far, in the distant past and in times to come. We make models of how this nature works, and use these models to fashion nature's working to our own liking.

The body of human knowledge basically consists of these models, continually refined in the light of the increasingly rich experience of the working of nature as people have gone on moulding it to satisfy their growing appetites. Science, perhaps the crowning achievement of human endeavour, has grown out of this knowledge. But science is not simply systematized knowledge Its hallmark has been the insistence

on confronting its models with the empirical world—with stubborn, irreducible facts. It is a very open, social endeavour of elaborating models of the working of nature that are continually tested against the facts of nature. This process is not carried out in secret by a small group, but in view of all people, with everybody invited to join in, to figure out what is happening, to refute commonly-held beliefs if they can rustle up sufficient evidence to the contrary.

It is this special way of growing knowledge that has conferred on science its tremendous success in advancing human understanding of the working of nature. Knowledge is power and people have put this understanding to tremendous use in handling nature. So science has served as the handmaiden of technology and technology has helped people gain increasing access to natural resources. Thus has developed a strong chain of science-technique-appropriation.

But science has another role as well, namely, of guiding practices that would lead to prudent use of resources in fashioning a science-practice-resource conservation chain. To

take a very simple example, knowledge can help hunters devise bird traps using the sticky latex of banyan and peepal trees. But knowledge may also suggest to them that the availability of the fruit of banyan and peepal trees is important in supporting bird populations and therefore protecting these trees could be very useful in sustaining bird populations in the long run.

The connections in the former instance are easier to see and even a solitary hunter can put such knowledge to immediate use. The connections in the latter instance are more difficult to see and translating them into practice by protecting banyan or peepal trees depends to a large extent on the cooperation of other members of the social group. It is therefore not at all surprising that the science-technique-appropriation chain is well developed, while the science practice conservation chain is a much weaker one.

Indeed, history shows that societies have largely followed a different route, namely, science-techniqueappropriation - overuse - substitution. Over the last 300 years of triumph of modern science and technology, societies have been continually using resources in a profligate manner, exhausting them, and then substituting for them through technological innovation. In fact, the technological revolution began with British metal-makers being forced to substitute mineral coal for wood charcoal in the manufacture of iron, simply because wood had become too scarce. Initially, iron made by using mineral coal was of an inferior quality, but as technology developed it surpassed the iron manufactured earlier with wood charcoal. Steam locomotive was invented when horse-drawn transport ran into trouble because there simply was not enough fodder for the horses. Again, the locomotive eventually became a far more efficient way of transporting people and goods.

As the process of science-technique-appropriation-overuse-substitution progresses, the techniques employed become ever more complex and accessible to a smaller and smaller number of people. While

horse carts can be fabricated with simple tools by village artisans, steam locomotives can be manufactured only in sophisticated modern factories involving an elaborate division of labour. Hence, as resource substitutions continue and techniques become increasingly elaborate, a narrower and narrower elite necessarily comes to monopolize the resource base at the cost of others. To take another simple example, as ground water is overused and its level falls, more and more sophisticated techniques of digging borewells are called for to retain access to this resource. Therefore, only a smaller and smaller group of rich farmers can afford to dig such deep wells and the smaller farmers are totally deprived of any access to the ground water.

The narrow elite that comes to profit in this process—the big landlords, the borewell rig operators, the technocrats supposedly regulating ground water usage, for instance -feels the need to explain away the suffering that has been inflicted on the large majority. There are undoubtedly many ways in which this is accomplished. A misuse of the prestige of science is one of them. This involves declaring that the resources are being used 'scientifically and therefore far better than ever before. Now, any use of natural resources involves interventions in natural processes. These could take the form of mining an ore, damming a river or harvesting trees.

Ouch interventions have several consequences, some desirable, others undesirable. 'Scientific' management of resources entails factually determining the nature of these consequences and ensuring that, in the balance, desirable consequences outweigh undesirable ones. A false claim to being scientific could then relate to: i) ignoring significant facts; ii) pretending to be in possession of facts, while actually being quite unsure of them; and iti) deliberately falsifying facts. Since stubborn, irreducible facts are the bedrock of science, any of these sins of omission or commission qualify for the epithet 'pseudo-scientific'.

Unfortunately, a great deal of what is claimed as 'scientific' mana-

gement of natural resources in India today is on this criterion thoroughly and comprehensively pseudo-scientific. It is instead motivated by the desire to use the prestige of science to justify interventions dictated more by narrow vested interests and less by any overall consideration of the social good.

Personally, the area that I am most familiar with is the forestry sector; hence most of the examples that I will cite come from that sector. I have no doubt that other sectors, be they mining or water, fisheries or power would also provide abundant appropriate examples. Consider first the ignoring of significant facts. Our resource management authorities are highly sectoral and uniformly ignore how their interventions would impinge on other sectors. Thus those in charge of river valley projects ignore the impacts on the forest cover of the catchment, and mining authorities make no provisions for reforestation.

But even within a given sector a whole range of significant linkages are lost sight of. Thus foresters go by a highly simplified model of the working of a forest. This model focuses on a few timber-yielding species and assumes that timber yields would be obtained on a maximal sustainable basis so long as the trees are harvested at an appropriate size depending on the form of the growth curve. While going by this caricature of our diverse tropical forest life, they tend to overlook much of real significance. Thus they ignore erosion of soil and drying of streams consequent on the opening up of the forest canopy. They ignore the invasion by weeds. They ignore outbreaks of pests and diseases when single species stands are created. They ignore the multifarious subsistence demands of the tribal and rural population on the forest vegetation.

Let me cite just one example of what happens when such a limited approach is pursued. In the 1960s, the rallying cry of foresters was that they should abandon conservation forestry (which, incidentally, was a total misnomer for the ongoing practices) and take to aggressive

forestry. By this was meant that foresters should begin the wholesale felling of natural forests and replace them by plantations of a few, fast-growing species like the eucalyptus. Project documents estimated that such plantations would yield between 14 to 28 tonnes per hectare every year. This approach was pushed through and natural forests—including the wonderfully species-rich tropical rain forests on the slopes of the Western Ghats—were cut down to raise eucalyptus.

Now we know from studies in other parts of the world that the soil of tropical forests is rather poor in nutrients, with most nutrients being held in plant biomass. The erosion of this soil was also a serious limitation for the plantations being raised. Then there was a rapid invasion by new weeds, such as the cupatorium in the Western Ghats, that formed a rank growth suppressing young tree growth and fuelling major fires in the summer. Finally when the eucalyptus did grow, it was virulently attacked by a fungus -the pink disease—which retarded its growth. As a result, the realized annual yields from eucalyptus plantations were just 1.5 to 3 in place of the 14 to 28 tonnes per hectare projected earlier. The loss of productivity and diversity by cutting down rain forests to plant eucalyptus far outweighed the measly returns of this hasty and thoroughly non-scientific experiment.

Forestry also involves pretending that many facts are known when they are simply not available at all. Thus the basis of a great deal of forest working is the harvesting of trees at a particular point in their growth. For this one needs information on the growth curves. Leaving aside teak and sal, the growth curves of hundreds of species in our forests are simply not known. Over the last century a number of socalled increment plots were set up throughout the country to measure tree growth and determine these curves. But no proper records were maintained and most of these plots have in fact been destroyed. Nevertheless, forest working plans are prepared and prescriptions are made pretending as if all the relevant facts are indeed well known.

Finally, facts are often quite deliberately distorted. For instance, over the last two decades, there has been a great deal of debate about the extent of forest cover and the level of forest standing stocks in India. Although these are parameters crucial to forest management and decisions such as the capacity of forest-based industry that can be supported, no proper information has ever been available. The only form in which such information can be obtained is in terms of the area of land under control of the forest department. This is a legal definition, with no reference to whether such land supports forest vegetation. That is why the Dhebar Commission on scheduled tribes remarked on the vast stretches of treeless forests in India.

But even this minimal information on land legally controlled by the forest department has been unreliable. So much so that the National Commission on Agriculture came up with two very different estimates, 69 million hectares and 75 million hectares some 25 years ago and reported that it could not resolve the problem in spite of serious efforts. All along, the forest authorities had claimed that most of these 69 or 75 million hectares had good tree cover. Then came the satellites and beginning with the early 1970s, photographs became available that could be interpreted in terms of vegetation cover of land with a reasonable degree of confidence.

More importantly, this information was accessible to an independent agency not involved in forest manangement, and hence with no vested interest in biasing the information one way or another. The Space Department was keen on proving that satellites generated useful information. So they went ahead and showed that at most, 35 million hectares of India's land surface had good canopy forest. This grossly contradicted the claims of forest managers and a long debate ensued. But the debate was not an open one, contradicting the spirit of scientific enquiry, and soon turned into internal wrangling between the forest and space bureaucracies.

Finally a so-called reconciliation was effected, with the space people being forced to concede that their estimates were too low. Worse still, the forest managers created an agency of their own, the Forest Survey of India, that established a monopoly on the interpretation of satellite imagery in terms of forest cover. The space people, with no involvement in the actual management of forests, are obviously far more likely to provide a truer picture. They have now been prevented from making public their findings. The maps and reports that the Forest Survey is producing today are extremely poor in information con-tent and are widely suspected of distorting the facts. My own field experience suggests that this is very likely to be the case.

Some years ago I was asked by the Karnataka government to look at the bamboo resources of the state as a result of an agitation by basket weavers contending that their livelihood was threatened by the overexploitation by paper mills. A careful look at the bamboo stock estimates prepared by the forest department revealed them to have been overestimated by a factor of as much as tenfold. Privately, my friends in the department conceded that there is pressure on them to overestimate the resource base to justify setting up new industrial units. Since industry makes large profits, they are not concerned if the resources are overestimated and are in consequence far more rapidly exhausted than the original projections suggest.

The pseudo-scientific management of India's natural resources is thus beset with the neglect of many significant facts, false claims about them or their deliberate distortion. Now, a genuinely scientific enterprise would eliminate such contradictions rapidly through an open process of assessment of facts and working hypotheses. But the management of India's natural resources is a closed, highly centralized bureaucratic enterprise which leaves no scope for a corrective response. The documents involved are official documents, with the colonial Official Secrets Act coming in handy to stifle all scrutiny.

To turn to a non-forestry sector example: I was once a member of a committee entrusted with evaluating the environmental impact of a planned hydro-electric project on the river Bedthi. I was shocked to discover that the committee was expected to complete its task on the basis of a field visit lasting just seven hours. None of the other committee members had ever been to Bedthi valley. But I had been doing ecological fieldwork in that area for some years. So even before the field visit I knew from a perusal of the detailed project report that it had deliberately underestimated the extent of submersion of cultivated land.

I pointed this out and suggested that the whole issue be examined much more carefully and with the involvement of the local people. The power corporation officials were vehemently opposed to this. But I now had in my hands the detailed project report that no other member of the public would have had access to. So I insisted on pursuing an exercise in environmental and social cost-benefit analysis of the project on my own, in collaboration with the teachers and students of a local undergraduate college and with the support of the local farmers' cooperative society. The exercise showed that the cost-benefit ratios presented in the project were incorrect, and were in fact far less favourable than claimed. We also succeeded in holding a public discussion on the whole project, ulti-mately leading to a much more balanced decision by the Karnataka state government.

Duch exercises must become the rule rather than rare exceptions if we are to manage the country's natural resources on a truly scientific basis. Our current river valley project reports or forest working plans are 'scientific' in form, with all sorts of formulae and numbers. But they are thoroughly unscientific in content since many of the formulae are invalid and much of the data either cooked up or deliberately distorted. The only way this can change is if these are exposed to skeptical enquiry by outsiders in the true spirit of scientific activity.

But such skeptical enquiry cannot take place so long as it is suppressed by the official machinery with its own vested interests. We have seen this happen again and again, most recently with the Narmada project.

The first step should therefore be to scrap the Official Secrets Act and bring in its place a Freedom of Information Act. Apart from this, we should set up an alternative institutional structure to deal with information on natural resources. This should not be another bureaucratic agency like the National Information Centre. Such a centre should rather support an open, decentralized data bank located in institutions with public involvement.

We have throughout the country a network of undergraduate colleges in almost every one of our 450 districts. We should choose one college per district to become the 'district natural resource data bank'. In this data bank should be deposited all the pertinent statistics collected by government agencies, other sources of information such as satellite images and relevant scientific publications. Educational institutions and voluntary agencies as well as government agencies should be encouraged to contribute to and use this data bank. All proposals for the utilization of the natural resources of the district should then be openly scrutinized on the basis of this data. with local educational and voluntary agencies being specifically encouraged to participate in exercises of environmental impact assessment. My own experience with involving an undergraduate college in assessing the Bedthi project shows that such a mechanism would be both far more effective and far less expensive in getting the job done.

Indeed, I believe that promoting natural resource management science as a people's activity in place of a centralized, bureaucratic, pseudoscientific enterprise has a great deal to recommend for itself. It would not only help the country manage its natural resource base in a far more efficient and sustainable fashion, but would also serve to foster science on a much broader basis as an enterprise of positive social value.

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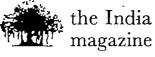


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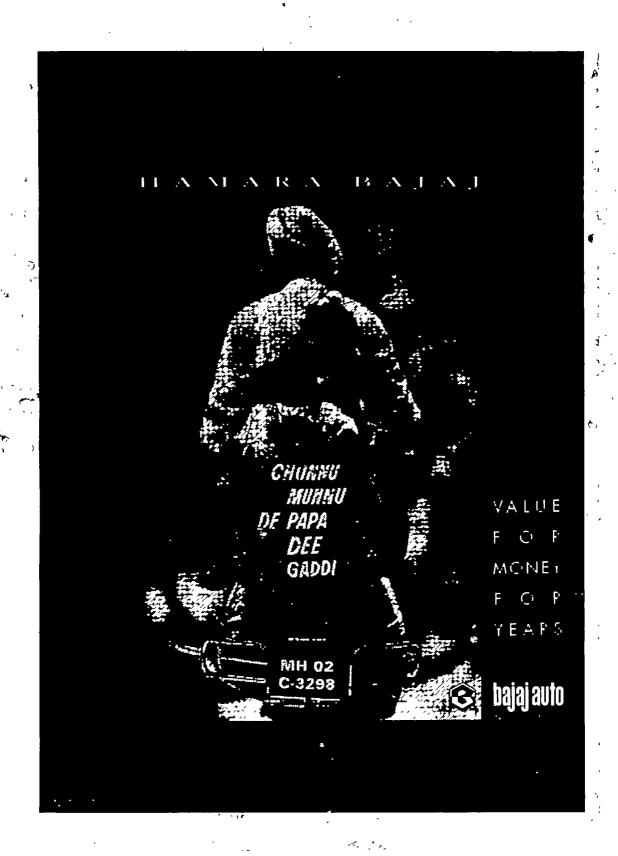
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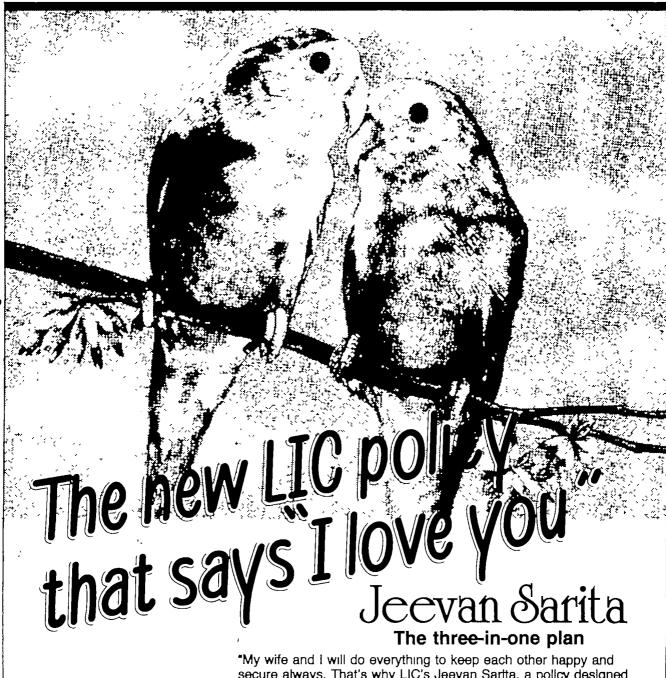
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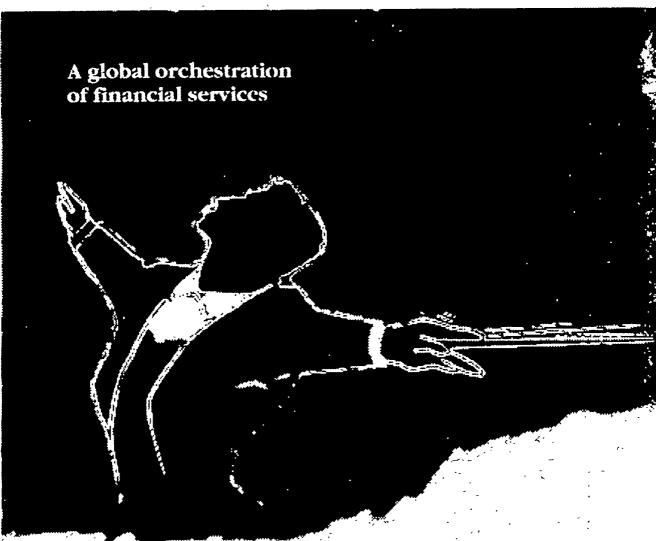
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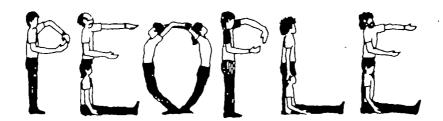
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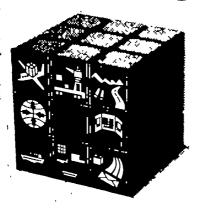




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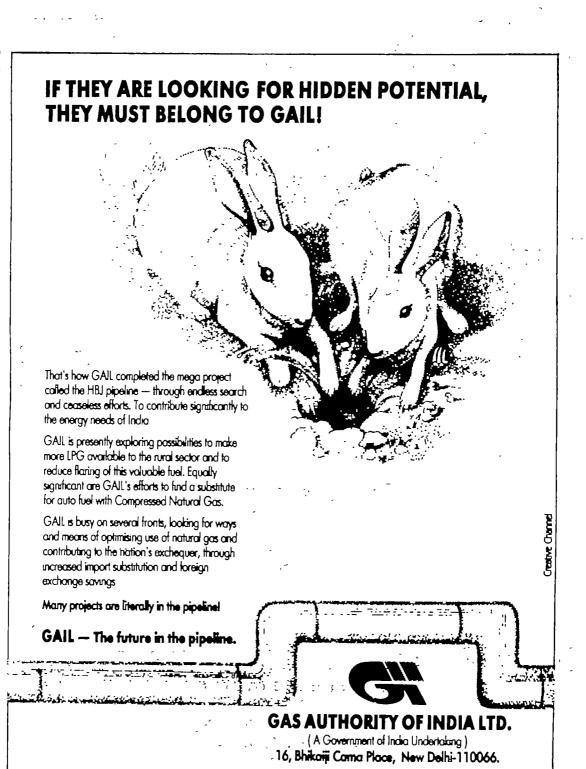


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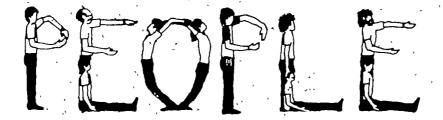
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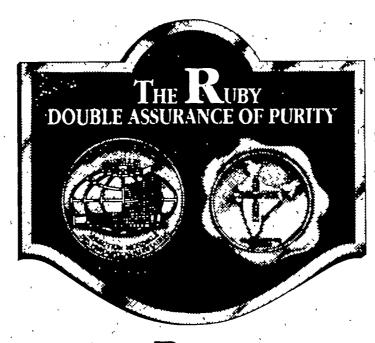


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JEXT MONTH: KASHMIR TODA

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a symposium on the challenges posed by satellite broadcasting

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### The problem

EVER since their establishment, All India Radio and Doordarshan have survived and thrived by one virtue alone: of being government-owned monopolies. There is nowhere in the free world, let alone countries with functioning democracies, where the state has come to control radio and television in as absolutist a fashion.

But something incredibly dramatic happened to the Indian electronic media in the last two years: the world around it changed. The advent of satellite and cable television completely bypassed all notions of singular control of the waves. For Indian TV audiences 1991 will be remembered as the year of the electronic invasion. For Indian government it will be known as the year of being hit by the bolt from the blue.

Historians of Indian broadcasting have frequently dwelt upon the strange dichotomy between the growth of a privately-owned, flourishing print media, eager to guard its freedoms, and an electronic media possessed, and eventually emasculated, by politicians. The fault, they argue, lay in the seed. Whereas the earliest regional language newspapers in the 19th century were started by social reformers and political nationalists like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Gopal Gokhale, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Gandhi, the first radio clubs run by the Indian Broadcasting Company in the 1920s were operated by government licence. At the opening of the Bombay radio station in 1927, Lord Irwin the Viceroy spoke exactly the kind of twaddle that his Indian inheritors took to parroting down the ages. Of the advent of the

new media he said: 'Both for entertainment and for education its possibilities are great, and as yet we perhaps scarcely realize how great they are.'

He knew exactly why radio's possibilities were great (between 1935 and 1939 the government took over the radio stations, ratifying its control constitutionally) and World War II came in handy to prove his point. AIR and later, Doordarshan, started out as instruments of government propaganda and that is what they have remained. Dr B V Keskar, one of the early and perhaps longest-serving Information and Broadcasting ministers, was more blunt than Lord Irwin when, speaking as government's expansionist proconsul for radio. he said: 'There has been interference, and there shall be more and more interference.'

No government of free India in 45 years, Congress or Janata, has shown the political will to go through with complete reform: that is, eliminating the politician's power to control radio and TV. All those efforts—and all those weary sages like Chanda, Verghese, Joshi and Varadan with their dusty reports-in retrospect appear feeble, fickle or repeatedly browbeaten by politicians. Even the Prasar Bharati Bill for creating an autonomous corporation was watered down to reject concepts of trusteeship and constitutional safeguards: insist that the broadcasting wing of Information and Broadcasting not be dismantled; demand that both the I&B secretary and finance secretary stay as ex-officio members on the corporation's board; and that parliamentary committees remain the final arbiters in settling contentious issues.

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Still, two years after the bill became an act of Parliament it remains unimplemented. Last November's Varadan committee report which advised leasing out radio and TV channels and setting up regional channels is still knocking around the PMO in the hope that the cabinet committee on political affairs (CCPA) will some day peruse it. And last February's interdepartmental committee suggesting the immediate establishment of a cable authority continues to rot in some Shastri Bhawan steel. Government by committee,' wrote Ashish Ray, ITN and Channel 4's South Asia correspondent in The Economic Times recently, 'betrays a lack of conviction and expertise on the part of the politicians.' In the debate over the future of the electronic media, government committees have always carried a suggestion of black comedy. But now they carry a hint of gallows humour.

For even if any of these longwinded recommendations materialize as a reality nothing much will change, neither the medievalist thinking of the I & B ministry nor government's intentions. In reality, the system of political control of AIR and DD has so atrophied operation of the networks that they are mable to fulfil their primary function, which is purveying news and information swiftly, succinctly and dispassionately.

It is ironic that the two Indian Prime Ministers, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, who openly disfavoured delinking the electronic media from political control had coverage of their assassinations so appallingly botched up by AIR and DD. It is also no coincidence that just as K A Varadan submitted his recommendations late last year, the I&B minis-

try finally succumbed to years of pressure by AIR and DD staff members and took the legal step of transforming them en masse into full-fledged government servants. It created something called the Indian Broadcasting (Programme) Service. If that doesn't sound too different from the Viceroy's Indian Broadcasting Company, it isn't. It may be a few ticks different in charter but the underlying spirit is the same—of subjugation.

Elsewhere, there might have been cries of shame at several thousand media professionals becoming civil servants overnight. But here there were protests and sit-ins outside Broadcasting House by AIR and DD staff clamouring for yet more government benefits and promotions. As Ashish Ray remarked in the same article: 'You can possess all the autonomy you desire but still produce awful programmes.' Thousands of government servants, masquerading as media professionals, can only increase the awfulness of the hash.

But the arrival of satellite and cable TV has done two things: it has superseded the debate on autonomy in a fundamental sense. It has also put DD's abilities in stark relief. The satellite invasion transcends the idea of any tangible or terrestrial control. Politicians control the I&B ministry which, in turn, controls AIR and DD, but who controls the skies? The inability of politicians to answer that basic question has made them flounder like fish out of water. For instance, the oddest statement of the year came from I&B Minister Ajit Kumar Panja (who is, after all, just another Lord Irwin with a barrister's degree) saying that he was 'not in favour' of preventing satel-

lite telecasts by foreign networks. Not in favour? How on earth can he prevent satellite telecasts, when concerned departments of the government (such as the wireless authority in the Department of Telecommunications) have gone on record saying that there is no way such telecasts can be jammed or controlled.

What started as a highly-publicized trickle with CNN's live news coverage of the Gulf War early last year became a wave with the advent of Hutchvision's STAR-BBC Asian telecasts out of Hong Kong. By the end of 1991 ADMAR, a Bombay-based market research agency estimated that between 200 to 250 households were being hooked on cable every day. Scarcely a week has passed since without reports of some foreign satellite network planning an assault on Doordarshan's captive audience of 250 million.

Canal France International or the \$25 million NRI-funded Asia Television Network (believed to be encouraged by an Indian political party) or even the Pakistanis, with their superior TV plays and serials—all were already in the act or hopeful of getting into it. In addition, Avtar Lit, the Phagwara-born, London-based originator of the hugely successful Sunrise Radio (Britain's licenced station for its South Asian immigrant population) arrived last October to open his commercial advertising office in India and went so far as to suggest a satellite exchange between his station and AIR.

Of course, nothing came of it; for it is in the nature of status quoist monopolies that they are slothful, contemptuous of creative ambition and resistant to the winds of change. It came as no surprise that throughout the early period of the electronic invasion the I&B ministry displayed its customary complacency. Officially, its stand was that cable TV remained an infant compared to the DD giant. In numerical terms the stand was valid: STAR and local cable channels added up to a viewership of around 42 million compared to DD's 250 million, that is, roughly one-ninth of the total. In software terms, that is programme content and quality, the latent assumption was that it would be hard for foreign satellite channels to compete with DD's staple entertainment of 9 p.m. serials, Indian movies and film songs. Of DD's abysmal standards in news and current affairs programmes there was neither much mention nor concern. Yet this was the key area in which STAR gradually hoped to wean audiences away together with a mix of music, sport and the local cable networks' ability to supply non-stop movies. Late last year the I&B ministry finally began to show some unease; like Rip Van Winkle, it rose from its big sleep to negotiate with Hutchvision's STAR to lease its transponders to the Indian government for beaming DD telecasts overseas. However, according to newspaper reports, the deal fell through financially. Half-hearted though the effort was, it was patently the wrong way to counter the invasion. In the end, the Indian achievement (said Ajit Panja proudly) was to set up a small receiver in the Maldives for retelecasting DD programmes, ostensibly for attracting Indian viewers in the US and Gulf states.

The Indian electronic media seemed beseiged by bad luck. For the first time in its history the I&B ministry was unable to ratify the appointments of the heads of DD and AIR (both had acting director generals). DD lost the rights for live telecasting of the World Cup in Australia and New Zealand to STAR and committed the additional folly of showing 15 minutes of one-day cricket matches as opposed to 30 minutes on STAR. And although it did succeed in showing parliamentary proceedings on TV, the credit for that went to the Parliament Secretariat, not to DD. Instead, DD became bogged down in a mire of its own vacillations. It got rapped by a parliamentary committee for underutilization of advertising time (2.5% rather than 5%) and came up with a proposal to double its Rs. 300 crore advertising revenue by newer packages for smaller advertisers. And the I&B ministry got rapped by the industries ministries and electronic manufacturers for not opening up the communications field amidst the general industrial loosening: companies in the business estimated that mini satellite dishes could be produced for as little as Rs. 18,000 if the industry were permitted mass production. Instead, TV manufacturers found themselves throttled by over-saturation and loss of new ventures in the field of satellite dishes, cordless phones, fax machines etcetera.

Something was seriously wrong. Nothing demonstrated it better than the debate—all over again, with renewed absurdity—over a private channel for DD. It had been suggested long ago by the Verghese working group; then last year's Varadan committee chewed much of the same cud in accordance with the Congress Party manifesto which commits itself to rights for public corporations to function in competition to Prasar Bharati. Well, will there be a private second channel or not? Who would run it, where and how? Most important who would cough up the Rs. 2,800 crores estimated in costs for setting up such a channel?

At one point matters became so hysterical—principally due to the confusions of Ajit Kumar Panja and his ministry—that a war between the principal print media barons, all with stakes in the burgeoning TV software industry, was threatened. As expected, nothing came of it. The differences of opinion were so enormous (one group arguing that new radio and TV channels should be franchised to public institutions such as universities, another saying private industry was better, and Varadan carefully hedging his bets) that it all turned out to be an extension of the same old syndrome: inaction through committee, that is, a failure to decide for fear of the monopoly crumbling.

In this the posturings of the controllers of the electronic media—in this case the I&B ministry—were no different from those dissolute 18th century nawabs of Bengal and Oudh facing the British onslaught, or, indeed, the French monarch who, told of the approaching revolution, muttered: Apres mois le deluge.

SUNIL SETHI

### Plodding on

SEVANTI NINAN

TAKE a government department, bind it with rules from head to too, give it resources that fall far short of its needs, and then saddle it with expectations and command it to perform. Will it soar, or will it genuflect?

Doordarshan was born unlucky. It was a small experiment engendered by UNESCO that grew willy nilly into a network. Its creed was supposed to be service to a nation dogged with problems, a heavy burden surely for a new entertainment medium to carry. But the guiding principle of those who ran it was ad hocism. Each milestone in the life of Doordarshan was a reaction to some extraneous development. And since nobody at any stage in its early evolution actually planned for its growth and development, it never occurred to anybody that this medium of the future would have requirements very different indeed from a government department. Or from radio of which it remained an extension for the first 20 years of its existence. If Jawaharlal Nehru had a vague notion, he did nothing much about it because television was not a priority in his scheme of things.

His daughter came along as Information and Broadcasting minister and set up a committee in 1984 which suggested that TV should have a 20-year plan of development. The suggestion was ignored. Subsequent committees have made a variety of other suggestions all of which have fallen by the wayside.

So today when we shriek about doomsday overtaking Doordarshan because there is a new STAR on the horizon, what do we expect this benighted behemoth to do? Shed its cadres, codes and committees overnight and turn competitive? Or shut shop and retire? Is the Government of India planning to retire because it is large, unproductive and a drain on the exchequer? Still bound hand

and foot after much talk about autonomy, DD can only do what it has always done: plod on.

Over the years one can pick out the major things that went wrong in the evolution of state television. One was ad hocism, and unplanned growth; another was being shackled to government which led to an exodus of talent, and an accumulation of mediocrity; and the third was its gradual and complete politicization. Today it is massive, unproductive, and largely mediocre in output. And giving it statute-book autonomy will not change those basic liabilities.

One will attempt to chart the points at which things went wrong. It started as an experiment in social communication for which small teleclubs were organized and provided with community sets. The initial software was produced by a small team with a strong theatre background. Initially TV was tentative, but relevant and responsive. This was in 1959. Educational TV came in 1961 with school broadcasts in the morning and community broadcasts in the evening. Then, with Mrs Gandhi's tenure as I&B minister, came agriculture, personified in Krishi Darshan.

But even as the new medium was acquiring a public service character, the growth of television sets was in the private sector. Household TV sets grew in number faster than community ones provided by the government. So that in its first decade itself the dilemma of whether TV should entertain or edify emerged. With barely an hour and a half of transmission time to play around with, the dilemma was never satisfactorily resolved.

Meanwhile other compulsions surfaced: Pakistan had television, and those who managed to acquire TV sets both in the Kashmir valley and in Punjab were happily watching the

transmission from across the border. In reaction to that, after being confined to the city of Delhi for 14 years, TV suddenly expanded to Bombay, Srinagar and Amritsar. Perhaps the first of many ad hoc developments. Ironically, when the government panics today over Pak TV beginning transmission over ASIA-SAT, it is merely history repeating itself. And 20 years later it is as unprepared to meet the challenge.

Even as the GOI was frantically despatching radio professionals to start up TV stations all over the place came both the Emergency and SITE, the satellite experiment on insfructional television. Both were landmarks of different kinds: with the first the political breed woke up to the propaganda possibilities of the medium; with the second, television discovered its own potential as an educational tool in a country with a poorly developed rural school network. But SITE, alas, was for just a year, and successor programmes which followed in later years have never been given the same order of committed resources in terms of money and suitable manpower by the government.

Meanwhile, of course, with the ad hoc expansion of TV to several parts of the country, politicians had already woken up to the employment possibilities it offered for their kith and kin. In the early 1970s came pressures to accommodate all and sundry in this body; in the latter 1970s and early 1980s came the pressure for exposure on this wonderful new medium from politicians of the ruling party. Rajiv Gandhi and his men would, of course, later refine this into an art.

If one were to ask when in these 30 years Doordarshan actually acquired the status of a media organization, the short answer is never. Somewhere along the way it evolved as an adjunct of radio, with the same constraints, and it seems not to have occurred to the right people to question why radio and TV professionals should have to spend their careers being graded as under secretaries or deputy secretaries; why these bodies should have all the cumbersome TA-DA and purchase rules of government departments,

when the tasks they were performing were so different.

In the early 1980s when Vasant Sathe fought off opposition in his party and government to establish colour TV, and commercialization of the network followed thereafter. DD gradually found itself facing an identity crisis. Suddenly there were expectations of it which had never been there before. People were ex-pecting it to deliver like a full-fledged commercial television network when it simply wasn't one. Suddenly people were tuning in and wanting slicker and better fare, when they never even tuned in before. Suddenly people everywhere, including the rural areas, were buying more and more TV sets. The first rush to buy newly manufactured colour TVs came with the Asiad. It rose with the advent of serialized soaps and more and more film-based programmes.

Now there was demand for software, demand for extended transmission time and then still more demand for software. And what did DD have to meet these challenges with? A motley bunch of squabbling cadres, dozens of budgetary regulations within which to function, and more and more heavyweight bureaucrats looking over its shoulder. As TV companies blossomed outside to meet the demand for sponsored programmes, the worthwhile talent that was there quickly exited: the deadwood that had come in over the years dug in and stayed. The list of those who left is quite impressive: M S Sathyu, Sai Paranipe, Shama Zaidi, Sashi Kumar, and among the newer talents, Reeta and Som Bakshi who recently made Pukaar. The list of those who stayed, eminently forgettable.

So far DD had managed to evolve very little of the work culture of a professional TV set-up. Producers were seldom allowed to specialize, and whenever they rose up the ladder they became babus. A hybrid cadre, which surely no TV organization in the world has, called the Central Information Service, moved in and out of TV, manning news production jobs when they were there, and doing something quite different when they were somewhere else. Equipment was often used

long after it became obsolete; to this day master tapes are used in news production many times beyond their stupulated life. The current acting director general of DD has said several times that there are at least 200 cameras in his organization that need replacing. There is no such thing as a low cost approach to television. The medium costs money. Low investment television can only add up to lousy television.

With the advent of Rajiv, television overtook radio as a priority. This dashing young 21st century prime minister was made for TV: he looked good on it and was savvy enough to recognize its potential as a political tool.

If Mrs Gandhi had developed television's development potential and dismissed the notion that a government medium needed to aspire to credibility, her son developed its political potential. Only, being new to the job of deploying the medium, his aides went in for overkill. When Rajiv, with Sonia in tow, set out to discover India in 1985-86, TV followed him faithfully, recording every chat with a clutch of miserably poor villagers, every expert jump over a large puddle, every time that he chucked a child under the chin. Since Rajiv had a lot of discovering to do in those days, we got a lot of these video documents on our TV sets. Later, the architect of these candid camera PM shows, Mani Shankar Aiyar, would admit that they overdid it.

However, since TV was now a priority, it got attention. Rajiv's tenure saw innovations such as a live budget programme, it saw the arrival of a new director general who thought he would professionalize the place. Despite the dated equipment, the complete lack of functioning autonomy, the deadwood in the staff, and the stranglehold of the ministry of Information and Broadcasting which had not been questioned until this point.

The new men at the helm, with the active intervention of the Prime Minister's office, being slightly more sophisticated creatures familiar with television abroad, also thought the new medium needed a soucon of

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credibility to make its messages more digestible. So they masterminded a current affairs face-lift which the press quickly dubbed Operation Credibility. One documentary on the incipient Gorkhaland movement in Darjeeling recorded West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu saying tartly, 'Why should I tell lies, I am not a Congressman.' This might not sound like a terribly daring thing to carry for any other TV network in the world, but for Indian TV it was unheard of before. It was a Great Leap Forward.

More was to follow. The thought of televising Operation Bluestar live in 1984 would have been totally unthinkable. But in 1988, when Operation Black Thunder was undertaken, again at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, DD was there, its team led by an independent journalist from the print media, and viewers saw much of the action. But this phase did not last long. The opposition was now getting a look in on TV: V P Singh, who had left the government and gone his own way, won a thumping victory in a by-election in Allahabad and got live coverage in 1988 because DD had decided to begin its experiment in live election telecasts with this by-election. It was, in retrospect, an unfortunate decision, and one that was to lead Rajiv and his cabinet to review the wisdom of permitting Operation Credibility.

Eventually, very soon, Rajiv's Doon School groupies notwithstanding, the old political cabal prevailed upon the Prime Minister to cease fancy experimentation with a powerful medium which had a vast, largely illiterate viewership. Out went the director general, out went fancy notions of credibility, Rajiv told the world that the Indian people were not ready for television autonomy, and in came K K Tewary.

But before this came the state elections in Tamil Nadu, and in the countdown to it, Rajiv Gandhi was shown on television day in and day out, campaigning for his party. Judging by the TV cameras, the crowds turned out in huge numbers to hear him. But when polling day came the Congress, which had decided to go it alone in these elections,

not entering into an alliance with the AIADMK, was routed, Doordarshan's services not withstanding.

There was a lesson to be learned, but an increasingly desperate Rajiv Gandhi was in no mood for lessons. Doordarshan's hapless staff who were having to adjust to the government's frequent changes of mind on how TV should be wielded, now had to contend with Tewary who declared early in his tenure that credibility was for the cocktail circuit. The elections were six months away and he had a job to do. Those six months saw a terrific propaganda barrage, for the first time after the Emergency. Thus the Gandhis, mother and son, dealt a body blow to the emergence of a more professional, more credible Doordarshan.

In 1989 the misuse of television became an election issue. So had it in 1977, following which the Janata government had attempted to confer autonomy on Doordarshan, but had been too fainthearted to see this through. 'Perhaps I was wrong,' an older and wiser L K Advani would say in early 1990. In 1990 the attempt was revived by another non-Congress government. But side by side the new information ministry was turning out to be as squeamish as the old one: secessionist movements in the Soviet Union were censored on Indian TV lest it give the extremists in Punjab and Kashmir ideas, much in the same way that K K Tewary had censored the events at Tiananmen Square in China in June 1989.

In retrospect, the efforts to pass the Prasar Bharati Bill in Parliament in 1990 established clearly that there is a pact across party lines that TV must subserve political motives. It is not called that of course: it is called 'national objectives'. The debate in the Lok Sabha on the bill saw MPs of all shades strenuously arguing for accountability. A much diluted Act finally entered the statute book, one which provided for a committee of members of Parliament to oversee the new autonomous network. And there it has rested.

Meanwhile, the Congress returned to power in 1991 with the new pro-

mise of privatization, and of providing competition to Doordarshan. But in a sense, the fact that we can consider privatization today is Doordarshan's major achievement. Over the last decade it catalyzed in the private sector the emergence of a variety of television talents, production companies that have the wherewithal if not the monetary resources to generate considerable amounts of quality software. This would not have happened had Doordarshan not opened its doors to sponsored programmes. The options before the government now, following the recommendations of yet another government committee, are to lease out regional channels to TV consortiums or public bodies so as to provide Prasar Bharati (if and when it comes) with some competition. It is an option over which it has already dithered for a couple of months.

And where should Doordarshan go from here? Since in the years to come there will be entertainment on tap on the other satellite channels as well as on future Indian channels. should it consider reverting to its public service role, something it never really grew into properly? Should it continue to broadcast or should it look towards narrowcasting as the way to beat the satellite crowd? After 30 years of Doordarshan much of the country still has Hindi programmes thrust down its throat, and gets national news which more often than not is plain Delhi news. Several states now have a transmission in the regional language but when it comes to programmes on agriculture, or community news, regional is simply not local enough. The world over the response to the challenge of satellite broadcasting has been to go more local.

Perhaps it is time, even if it is 30 years too late, for Doordarshan and those who run it to coopt a few individuals with the vision to plan its future development. And unkind as it may sound, to shed the baggage of mediocrity it has carried all these years by offloading many of those in there now, and starting afresh. How that can be done is for those who want it to survive, to work out.

### Breaking the mould

JAVED GAYA

WE need a new ideology for broadcasting. The minister, having promised broadcasting and telecasting rights to private corporations, is in a fix as to how to implement such a radical policy departure without disturbing both the existing power structure and ideology of broadcasting. And it is here that the real challenge lies: questioning the current ideological matrix of broadcasting philosophy.

Too often, we are obsessed by legislation, by laws which restrict freedom of expression. It is not realized how entirely absurd is the basis for government control over broadcasting: in essence, the Wireless and Telegraph Act of 1884, which, in the 1930s when radio came into vogue was the only applicable piece of legislation, continues to restrict private initiatives in broadcasting. However, legislation

is only the tip of the iceberg, it must in an ultimate sense be reinforced by widespread social attitudes. It is at this stage that the liberal argument for reform ceases to convince. The argument being that remove the legislation and everything will be all right. We need to do more than that, we need to transform peoples' attitudes to broadcasting and the entire information sector. In other words, we need to address the problem of ideology.

In a sense the Prasar Bharati Act represents a compromise between those distrustful of the government's intentions and those sceptical of the private sector's interest in delivering quality programmes. It is a deferral of a root and branch rethinking of what broadcasting should be about. An autonomous corporation is envisaged modelled on the BBC para-

digm. There are a number of deficiencies in this Act, but I will return to these later. The point is that the Prasar Bharati Act is comforting insofar as it does not even pretend to challenge the status quo. It is very much of a piece with our centralist, nation-building culture with an emphasis on developmental objectives. Yet these ostensibly admirable qualities are married with institutional autonomy, with places for the great and the good on the board of trustees and the promise of professionalism.

Unfortunately, the passing of the Prasar Bharati highlights the fact that the moral high ground in the debate for broadcasting is too easily conceded to the statist mindset. The contrast is constantly made with the Hindi film culture as being the apotheosis of the private sector's contribution to mass entertainment. One holds no brief for this phenomenon of mass culture save to sav that people in large numbers watch these films, which is more than can be said for Doordarshan. Ultimately, as Bal Mundkar of Ulka Advertising pointed out in a very per-ceptive address for Namedia: There is now almost universal acceptance of the fact that education does not have to be boring; and if it is boring, it will probably educate nobody. Thus, whether you wish to inform, educate or entertain, you have to give the viewer a good enough reason to do so. Viewer involvement and the medium's credibility have now emerged as goals that override the earlier superficial concerns with entertainment versus education versus information.' This quotation has the merit of putting in perspective the sterile debate over the role of television. It indubitably suggests that the media must attain credibility in its software policies before all else.

The BBC certainly had this credibility, right from the time of Lord Reith onwards. It is for this reason that the Verghese recommendations had been widely seen as a homage to this paradigm. The centre-piece of the Verghese recommendations—the National Broadcasting Trust—is a thinly disguised desi version of the BBC's board of governors. But the Verghese recommendations were

singular in their suggestion that the media be opened up to bodies such as non-governmental organizations and universities. In other words, it was looking beyond the state, looking to decentralize the media and, most important, provide access to the media to people and groups who otherwise would be excluded. The suggestion is that the cause of decentralization would be betrayed by restricting access to broadcasting just to the political plane: it must also provide access to different communities, minorities and non-government institutions which would serve to strengthen India's pluralistic society.

The predecessor to Verghese, the Chanda Committee, came out with some interesting suggestions in respect of state governments, arguing that they should enjoy telecasting rights in respect of the second channel. Today, there is perhaps little controversy that state governments should enjoy powers in equal measure to central government in respect of broadcasting, but the real concern is that rights to broadcasting should not just approximate to exercise of political power. It is important to acknowledge the liberating power of broadcasting, the power to criticize and expose those who exercise political power and wield influence.

It must not be overlooked that the argument for decentralization of the broadcasting media has ramifications for professionalization. The spur and incentive to quality must proceed from competition; and the prospect of one state monopoly competing against another can hardly furnish any grounds for optimism.

However, there are major weaknesses in the Verghese committee's
recommendations. First, the entire
thinking is anchored in a 1930s time
warp: it is wholly uncritical of the
BBC paradigm, oblivious of whether
such a paradigm can be sustained in
India; or indeed whether this paradigm is in fact suited to our constitutional, political and social context.
The entire confusion is based on
one factor: what the BBC has in
abundance and what our system
lacks sorely is credibility and the

assumption is made that if we adopt the BBC model then credibility will follow ineluctably. This premise is unfounded. But perhaps it is necessary to examine the source of the enchantment, the BBC, to understand why it will not and cannot work in our environment and why the Prasar Bharati is doomed to disappoint.

For many, the BBC represents impartiality, indepth research, correct use of language with the appropriate disdain for the colloquial or common, high culture, civilization. All fine things. But as a former director general, Sir Charles Curran, pointed out, this system is not easily exportable. There were special circumstances which attended the creation of the BBC monopoly. The BBC is a benevolent monopoly; that makes it close to unique since monopolies as a rule are not.

he founders of the BBC were sensible of the dangers posed by a monopoly and for this reason the organization was established by Royal Charter, an archaic vestige of the Royal Prerogative which effectively precluded any debate in Parliament on its performance. The only time when questions could be raised in Parliament would be when the Charter came up for renewal. The other safeguard was the fact that the governors of the BBC were Crown appointees. Underlining its independence and aloofness from day to day political pressure which is possible under peculiar English Constitutional arrangements, is its financial independence. From the beginning, the Crawford Committee which established the BBC insisted that the licence fee should be the sole source of revenue. The establishment of a licence fee provides the key to its financial independence from government, as its yield is independent of government's scrutiny taking on the character of a permanently hypothecated tax.

But beyond these intricate legal and constitutional arrangements, it would be unrealistic to not recognize that the UK and India are vastly different societies with different political and social norms. It is difficult to imagine how the autonomous institution envisaged in the Prasar Bharati Act can be insulated against

the corruption and degeneration of institutions that have taken place in India since independence.

The answer does not lie in vesting the state with ownership rights even through a statutory and albeit autonomous body. It lies in recognizing the diversity and plurality of society and widening access to the media to different groups. In practical terms, this will mean reducing government to a purely regulatory function, distributing licences to interested parties providing they comply with government regulations as to their broadcasting patterns and the break-up of their programmes. This will guarantee the freedom of the media.

And in this regard, the issue of finance is key. Something which the Verghese committee in the manner typical of most government constituted bodies almost wholly ignored. Even the BBC's licence fee had become controversial, and the Thatcher government had appointed the Peacock committee to look into the financing of the BBC in 1986 for the purpose of abolishing it and replacing it with advertising revenue. Peacock did not comply with his brief and his report was in the best tradition of British double-speak. But as a document covering the finances of international broadcasting systems, it is quite seminal and a treasury of information. It pointed out the fact that the BBC licencing system is quite unique, European public corporations largely relying on advertising for revenue.

The chief value of the Peacock report was the manner in which it highlighted the alternative delivery systems for programmes—video, cable and satellite—which has compelled governments the world over to regulate these systems and which have had the consequential effect of opening new vistas for broadcasting finance, moving the debate away from the standard argument of licence fee versus advertising. In fact, with the development of the systems, it becomes very difficult to justify supporting a monopoly by reliance on a licence fee as people have a variety of choice in viewing. The access to that choice in viewing requires to be buttressed by different sources of finance, either by subscription, advertising, sponsorship or government assistance; and this variety in finance support may prove a more effective guardian of freedom of the media than the most intricate and tightly drafted charter. Given the variety of delivery systems, this hope can easily be translated into reality.

f V ith Star TV, CNN and the video, our situation has changed dramatically. The All India Radio monopoly, for example, rested on Section 4 of the Telegraph Act, 1884; the rationale for this monopoly, like BBC's, was based on technical exigencies. These technical arguments have no relevance today. The range of frequencies radio can operate on has increased dramatically and AIR cannot usefully exploit existing airwaves. The government is quite clueless as to how to exploit these new phenomena other than thinking of ways to jam them, which they can't. If the government were genuinely interested in developing a new marketplace of news and entertainment and permit a greater range and a variety of opinions and views of different sections and interest groups in society to sustain the principle of pluralism, it would welcome these developments.

The principal confusion in this debate is over the precise role of government. It is no one's case that the state should not exercise control over what is broadcast. But control is not synonymous with ownership. There is a vital distinction one can make between ownership and regulation. The government does not require to own the media in order to regulate it.

The issue here is eminently one of ideology. A liberal society has to recognize that all elements of society are entitled to access to the media, and advertising on TV and radio is part of the price we have to pay for capitalism. Information, entertainment and ideas are part of the currency of modern societies, and as currency they have value. But good reason must be given for anyone to finance such a media. If sensible government policies attract money into this media, professionalization and decentralization must follow.

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### Who's afraid of satellite?

DAVID HOUSEGO

WHEN The Financial Times announced only a few years ago that typewriters would be scrapped and that journalists would be required to use computers, my first reaction was a surge of panic. Would I ever master the machine? Would I be able to compose on it? Like most people who regularly use a computer, I quickly found it more friend than enemy. With a portable laptop, in particular, I discovered the extraordinary possibilities that a computer opened up of storing notes, texts and addresses and of being able to work on them wherever I WAS.

But I was reminded of that first moment of panic when reading the Varadan report on the implications for India of the expansion of worldwide satellite and cable television. Here is a development that will transform broadcasting and communications and which removes national frontiers by allowing images to be dropped into every home. But beneath the flat, bureaucratic prose of the report surges the panic of a paternalistic administration at secing the future slip out of its control. Varadan writes, "This development has some disturbing implications. No country can afford to sit back passively and let some foreign agency decide what kind of programmes should be broadcast to the people of that country.'

Apprehension towards change has been a curious characteristic of post-independence India. Technological innovation, which in East Asia has been siezed on as an opportunity, has in India been regarded as a threat. How else to interpret India's reluctance to abandon the Ambassador—thus forgoing the development of a large-scale automobile industry which in most countries has been both a major employer of manpower as well a springboard for developing other technologies such as electronics and new materials?

This discomfort with change, and with the unpredictable that goes with it, probably has its roots in Nehru's faith in the concept of centrally planned economy to achieve the goals of national self-reliance and of orderly and equitable growth. In this vision of the world, foreign ideas and products far from being a source of strength, were increasingly seen as undermining national self-sufficiency. Entrepreneurial talent was lost because businessmen were treated with distrust, as motivated by profit and self-interest.

The capitalist classes had 'proved totally inadequate to face things as they are in this country', Nehru wrote<sup>1</sup> in 1949. 'They have no

<sup>1.</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru. A biography by S. Gopal.

vision, no grit, no capacity to do anything big. The only alternative is to try and put forward some big things ourselves and rope in not only these classes but the people as a whole. Otherwise we remain stagnant and at the most ward off catastrophe.'

Doordarshan, a state-owned television, conceived by a benevolently paternalistic administration as a vehicle of public enlightenment and education, is almost a symbol of 'the big things' that Nehru thought the public sector could do. But like many other public sector institutions, it has ended up a tottering idol-windy, a barrier to fresh talent and ideas rather than a source of them, abused by the governments that created it for their own propaganda purposes, and now too bureaucratic to find a cure to its own ills. Little wonder that the Varadan committee responds to satellite and cable with the kneejerk defensive reactions that Indian administrations have long used to ward off unwelcome change. Should viewers be given more choice of channels? There are counsels for caution against unrestrained proliferation of channels.' we are told. 'Broadcasting in India has essentially been informed by developmental and public interest objective."

Can television be safely entrusted to the private sector? The Varadan committee have their doubts. 'Broadcasting rights in the hands of unscrupulous elements could lead to very undesirable effects on the society,' they warn. Even more magisterially, they add in the best tradition of Nehruvian paternalism: 'Many eminent public men and sociologists have also cautioned against the deleterious effects on the Indian society of advertisements on the electronic media which are overtly consumerist in their content.'

Who will finance it? The pressure from companies anxious to establish a new channel scarcely suggests that there will be a financial problem. But Varadan replies: 'Establishment of additional channels would involve substantial investments and these can only come from the investible resources of the country. The question of according priority to the

further development of the broadcasting system would, therefore, have to be carefully considered in the context of the planned development of the country.'

In contrast to the sense of discomfort and apprehension that pervades the report, the reality is that the satellite and cable revolution—like European integration notwithstanding the alarms sounded by the right wing of the Conservative party—is now unstoppable. Ajit Panja, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, realizes this far more than his officials, and that the best way to influence the course of developments is to be seen to welcome them.

We cannot know in any detail how India's audio-visual landscape will look in five years time. But based on other countries' experience and the fact that this is a global phenomenon from which escape is difficult, we can be pretty sure of at least certain elements.

India will have at least one other national channel, privately owned, financed out of advertising, and offering a mixed programme of news, current affairs, entertainment and culture. Its hunger for films and documentaries will provide a major boost to the national film industry. Besides the two main national channels, several regional channels will spring up in response to India's regional and linguistic diversity. CNN and Star (including the BBC World Service television) are almost certainly the precursors to other foreign channels that will be available to Indian viewers-including programmes from China, Pakistan and the Islamic world. Video films will lose none of their importance.

This evolution is of a piece with India's shift towards a more market-oriented economy, in which there will be greater competition, the public sector will have a diminishing role, and in which foreign products will increasingly provide the yardstick by which to judge the quality of what is made domestically. More regional broadcasting will be in line with the growing pressures towards decentralization and giving the states more autonomy.

Urban centres will be the first to benefit from the range of television programmes that become available. But this situation will not last for long. As any consumer goods manufacturer will confirm, rural demand is the fastest growing segment of the Indian market. Village households will soon find the means of sharing out the costs of purchasing a dish and cabling. Television in India will soon have the potential of reaching audiences of hundreds of millions.

L o even sketch out this landscape is already to remove some of the bogeys. Hostile foreign governments will be in no better position to influence opinion in India than Doordarshan will be able to win hearts in Karachi or Lahore. It is unduly paranoic to think that they will be able to engage in systematic propaganda—or as S S Gill suggests, to use a private licensee as a front for beaming programmes inimical to our national interest'. The power of television will increasingly depend on its credibility. Viewers will simply switch channels if what they see does not ring true.

In this sense the spread of satellite and cable will make it harder for governments or private television operators to manipulate audiences. George Orwell turned out to be fundamentally wrong in seeing television as a powerful instrument of control in the hand of dictatorships. It was the images of laden shelves in West German shops that helped bring down Communist regimes in East Europe by puncturing their government's lies that communist societies had brought higher living standards than capitalist ones. Television is only a medium of control in isolated dictatorships. By definition those now no longer exist—or cannot guarantee their isolation.

Television will thus make it harder for regimes like Burma's to survive and harder for Malaysia and Singapore to maintain their curbs on freedom of speech. If cable and satellite had existed in the early 1970s it would almost certainly

<sup>2.</sup> S.S. Gill, Indian Express, 9 December 1991.

have been impossible for Indira Gandhi to have imposed the Emergency. By the same token it would be very difficult for an unscrupulous operator—one of the bogeymen of the Varadan committee—to use their channel to mount a personal campaign. The Ambanis torpedoed The Observer's readership when they used the paper to pursue their quarrel with The Indian Express. They would have lost their audience even faster if they had tried the same campaign on a television where viewers can easily switch to another channel.

Another misplaced fear is that satellite and cable, with their large infusion of foreign, and above all American, programmes will have a steamroller impact on Indian culture and values. The French had a similar concern when in the early 1980s they privatized one state channel and allowed the private sector to open others. The French took the excessively protectionist precaution of requiring at least 50% of the films shown on television to have been made in French. To their surprise, however, they found that the mushrooming of more channels provided a major boost to the French film industry which is now producing more documentaries and features than ever.

A similar boomerang effect in support of traditional values occurred in South Korea. There viewers have long had a choice between domestic Korean channels and the American forces network which broadcasts a large number of American films and serials. A survey3 found that amongst males the viewing of American programmes reinforced their faith in conservative Korean values, such as the family system, and their belief in the uniqueness of Korean culture. By contrast, it made females, generally more progressive, more conscious of their rights.

But if some of the fears have been exaggerated, it is equally misleading to raise expectations of the benefits that global television can bring in providing a more educated democracy or improving understanding between peoples. The Varadan committee falls into this trap in the first sentence of their report which proclaims that 'broadcasting has generally been perceived the world over as a powerful medium for social and cultural change'. Similar optimism was expressed by 18th century rationalists who believed that the spread of newspapers and the printed word would help spread goodwill and understanding in the world.

Western experience of television has been less encouraging. George Walden argues' that 'pictorially transmitted information' tends to shed more 'heat than light' on events: encourages viewers to a simplistic moralistic response to complicated issues: and can be a source of prejudice and partisanship more than of enlightenment.

Walden puts the blame for this on television's relentless search for the striking image—the battle scene that seems to convey the whole war, the charred interiors of a house that demonstrate the hatred behind a riot. The power of these selected images lies in photography's implicit claim to absolute truth. But as Walden argues, the camera provides a misleading view of what occurred and of the circumstances behind it. The camera lies most constantly, most inadvertently and with total conviction,' he writes. 'Lying is simply part of its essence. It cannot possibly live up to its pretensions of complete veracity. It is disjointed. impulsive, illogical: it can illuminate a point, distract, entertain, outrage, or intrigue the viewer. But the one thing it is most unlikely to do is to increase his understanding of the issue and the circumstances behind it.'

Selective images, nonetheless, have a powerful impact on emotions. The pictures that US camera crews brought back from Vietnam undermined public support for the war and in the end made it impossible for the US administration to continue with it. This lesson was learnt

in both the Falklands and the Gulf war where cameras were kept away from the battlefields until victory was in sight.

Will India find that commercial and competitive television simplifies issues, forces politicians to focus on the short term, and strengthens prejudices? The answer, unavoidably, is yes. Governments will find it harder to project reasoned policies or to defend existing ones over sensitive issues like Kashmir.

Most Western governments, as Walden says, complain that television is biased against them. Television, Walden writes, 'is by nature anti-nomian and anarchic. It breaks down reason into meaningless visual "facts" that often seem to conflict with or make a mockery of attempts by governments to project their policies as sober, consistent and logical'.

Television is likely to encourage populism. Already political parties have discovered the power of images in mobilizing public opinion. The fuse that ignited the anti-Mandal agitation was the powerful image of Goswami, the young upper caste student from Delhi, setting fire to himself. The BJP have focussed on the images of the Hindu temple at Ayodhya and on the rath to project themselves as a national Hindu party.

The expansion of television through satellite and television will inevitably carry with it some undesirable consequences. But the art of government is increasingly to realize where the state can realistically intervene and where it must realize the limitations of its power. Censorship is becoming increasingly unworkable. Attempts to control the flow of news through a global policing agency such as the New World Information Order (NWIO) are both undesirable and unenforceable. The most that governments acting together can achieve—but even this is difficult—is to limit advertising for products damaging to health such as tobacco or drugs. Otherwise it is the viewer who will determine what he sees. Only a state monopoly like Doordarshan can be afraid of that.

<sup>3.</sup> John Geun Kang and Michael Morgan, 'Cultural clash: impact of US television in Korea'. Journalism Quarterly, Volume 65, Number 2, Summer 1988.

<sup>4.</sup> George: Walden, 'Our Moralistic Media'. Encounter, 1988.

### Meeting the challenge

SEMINARIST

SUDDENLY, the cosy world of home-grown television is no longer what it was. In more and more homes viewers are able to change channels and get a variety of programmes: not only off the satellites, though these are the main source of the new stream of programmes, but from cable networks which are beginning to sprout all over the big cities and, in some cases, in not so big cities as well. In itself this need not be a bad thing, except for the manner in which the satellite programmes and the cable networks are financed. With the exception of the BBC World Service, all the other channels depend on advertising revenue. The cable networks charge a monthly fee, but are very aware of the fact that they have to cater to as many customers as possible to be able to earn.

This means that those who are putting together these programmes will be looking at what sells most, irrespective of what they may say about their commitment to high quality and so on. In their assessment, what TV audiences want is what is called 'entertainment', a term which is simply stuff that one can watch without exercising the mind. So there will be hysterical pop music for the young, inane comic features for older people, all kinds of quizzes and similar programmes watching which is a mindless process, a sort of mental massage. The cable networks purvey, if one is to believe subscribers to them, a number of cheap films which fall into the same category as the other programmes. The intention is, of course, to attract advertisers, and so there will be variations in the nature of the programmes, their essential 'entertainment' value remaining intact. Mushy, romantic stories for housewives, who might buy the detergent or cooking oil being touted with them; violence-packed serials for the youngsters who fancy a particular cold drink, or chocolate.

One might think that all this is all right, reasoning that a bit of mental massage might in fact do one good. The question is how much. Experience the world over indicates that these programmes are addictive, and have audiences glued to their TV sets, which is why advertising rates for television are so very high. And days and days of this kind of bombardment from cable and satellite or a combination of the two can be positively dangerous as, in a very direct way, it can hasten the vulgarization of taste, leading the satellite channel and cable network operators to coarsen their programmes further. 'Entertainment' can soon become a relatively milder evil in comparison, when the general attempt shifts to titillation and sensationalism of the worst kind.

What, then, can one do in this situation? Does one merely wait, head meekly bowed, for the degenerative process to take hold, and watch the airwaves fill with all that one would wish to avoid, or does one explore alternatives? And if so, what can these alternatives be?

One is the obvious one of making good programmes and getting a channel to telecast them. But this is also the most difficult. The mak-

ing of 'good' programmes will be differently understood by almost everyone in the business, including our worthy purveyors of satellite and cable delectation. They will, loudly and with indignation, count themselves among the select few considered good. Then, the power of advertising money, the money from cable connections, sponsorships and the middlemen will, or can, take over, and the position will be no better than before. Who decides what constitutes a 'good' programme? What about the viewers? Does 'goodness' necessarily mean boredom? To some, to many or to all?

An example is what happens to PBS programmes in the USA. It is not that these are not viewed, and it is not that they are not liked; in fact, some have been among the most popular programmes telecast in that country. But compare the number of programmes of this kind, and their viewers with the millions who are watching 'entertaining' television day after day and night after night. There is simply no comparison. And it is this which makes one despair. Even if one were to get good programmes on the air, they would be swamped by the other channels.

Another alternative could be a combination of two things. One is a method of breaking the nexus between advertising and television programmes, and the other a carefully worked out strategy to alter audience sensibilities over a long period of time. The first might have some effect in the short run, but not a very considerable effect; the second may never succeed, but if it does, it will be the only really effective answer.

It may be worthwhile to look at these two strategies a little more closely. We have said earlier that the channels operating off satellites are financed by advertising. Hence the constant search for larger and larger audiences. Now, if it were possible to finance programmes from some other source then, while one would certainly be happy to have large audiences, one would not have to pander to them. To put it a little differently, one could make programmes which replaced the mind

massage with a gentle cerebral shake-up, a stimulus. This would not work if the effort was confined to making just one or two programmes: it would have to be for all programmes on that channel. Initially, the format for such programmes would be very like those on the commercial channels: they would have to be, otherwise there would be hardly any viewership. Gradually, very gradually, the nature of the programmes could be changed. With good producers and a very careful monitoring of audience reaction one could, with a bit of luck, refain audiences and yet telecast programmes which are more worthwhile.

But what about the argument advanced earlier about the 'goodness' of a programme being relative? Who is to decide? This is a problem, it must be admitted, but it may be possible to overcome it by a structural change in the process of making programmes coupled with the method of alternative financing. The key to this is the re-introduction of a licence fee, or an initial surcharge on the price of a television set. It would not be an annual fee, as it is in the UK, but a onetime payment which would go into a corpus fund, as against the celebrated Non Lapsable Fund that still exists. If we assume a total of 25 million sets, and a one-time payment of Rs. 200, we would be talking of something like Rs. 500 crores, to which there would be a regular addition every time a new set was sold. This would form the basis of the funding the administration of this could be left to whatever structure is considered appropriate, but which has a panel of commissioning editors of proven merit and integrity. (This is, of course, where everything could fall down, but it is a risk one has to take.)

We said earlier that a key element in this is the very close monitoring such programmes will need. One cannot overemphasize the need for this. Unless those preparing programmes are aware in detail of audience reaction they will almost certainly go off the track and end up with something worthwhile but dull. Or something viewers find irrelevant.

This, then, is one strategy that may be worth trying out. It has to be a continuous process, audience reaction has to be closely watched, and the choosing of programmes has to be by a group whose merit and integrity would be unquestioned. Its basic strength would be that it would not be dependent on advertising, and it is this which will become the key to the strategy.

Nonetheless, faced with a variety of 'entertainment' channels and cable networks, the task of this new channel will be formidable, and it would be ridiculous to expect any immediate results. It may not attract viewers for a long time and the programmes could be boring. But on the other hand, it could just work. If those in charge keep their ears to the ground, the chances are that they will come up with worthwhile stuff. And, as time passes, it might gain viewership.

But it remains a chancy business. Hence the second alternative, one which will without doubt take several years to have any effect, but when it does it will almost certainly change the nature of satellite and cable programmes, at least in this country. This is something that, on the face of it, sounds absurd, but is not as silly as it may appear. It has to with the evolution of a very carefully worked out strategy to alter sensibilities.

If we go back a little in time, it will be evident that we have witnessed precisely such a change, and have taken it for granted, as inevitable. This is the change brought about by the cinema. The nature of the change need not detain us here. but that fact of the change is not to be discounted. That, too, took time, but it affected the quality of life in a seminal manner. This is not to suggest that we suddenly embark on making a certain kind of film; it is to suggest that there are motivating factors other than the cinema and television which can be agents of change of social attitudes, and even personal preferences. What these are need to be identified. Sometimes they may not be very obvious, and could be a sort of series of events which are organized, or participatory events, or even

prevalent fashion. Today, among certain people, it has suddenly become essential that they acquire contemporary works of art, or ethnic pots and dresses. An example of change, where the change agents have to be clearly identified if the changes are to be understood.

Jiven, then, that it is possible to alter social sensibilities, it follows that a strategy to make this possible can be worked out. For example, the different sections of the viewing audience can be identified and longterm methodologies of change developed. Badly done, the worst that can happen is that there will be no change; but if the strategies are based on accurate data and valid presumptions, and if they are imaginative, using a variety instruments or tools, it should be possible to change preferences on a macro level. At one level, this is the sort of thing SPIC-MACAY are doing by organizing performances by well-known performing artistes in colleges, exposing students to the different forms. It can be argued that this is only a process of creating awareness, not preference, but the one is usually a first step to the other, and in any case, the argument is not valid: one has only to see the large crowds at these performances to realize this.

Again, response to the methodologies used must be measured in detail and as accurately as possible. Without this, the possibility of failure becomes much greater. It would, as we have said earlier on, be wrong to expect any tangible results in the short term. It will be years before some kind of change will become noticeable, and when that does happen the great turnaround will be imminent. It will not take long for our purveyors of entertainment to realize that there has been this change, and, in the never-ending quest for larger and larger audiences it will become an economic necessity that the nature of programmes be altered to suit the emerging, different preferences.

There are one or two factors which will give those responsible for all this some time in which to initiate remedial action. The first is that satellite programmes are still

basically in English, which limits the audience very greatly. This will not, however, last for very long, as one hears that telecasts in other languages are being planned. Nor does this apply to the cable networks, which are in different languages already. But since the real invasion is by the channels coming off the satellites, it does offer some time, however brief. Another factor is that the satellite-cable system will continue to remain fairly expensive, and will, initially be located in the bigger cities, as will the cable networks. But this, too, will change, simply because an advertising or rental driven system must. by its very logic, keep expanding. It would therefore be unwise to depend on this state of affairs continuing for any length of time.

A third factor is that it is always open to the government to refuse to licence cable networks, which will kill the satellite channels as well. This is not the easy solution that it seems. Illegal cable networks have been around for a fairly long time, and it will be impossible to police every house to see if it has a cable link. Moreover, the rapidly altering technology of satellite transmission will make it fairly easy after some time for every home to receive satellite signals using a cheap dish antenna not more than a metre across. It is, consequently, important that the limitations of state action are seen clearly when remedial action is planned.

The short time available has therefore to be used with a practical sense of what is possible and what is not. The alternative strategies that have been suggested are by no means the ideal solutions, nor is there any guarantee that they will work. There may be other ways of countering the electronic invasion which will be more effective. But the strategies are being suggested as means which may work, and we will have to consider them, or some others, if we are to find a means of withstanding the mass of junk programming that will fill the airwaves soon, bringing with it new patterns of social behaviour, individual preferences, and social taste which will not do the country any good.

### Television comes of age

TARA SIN HA

IT is an exciting moment when you reach the threshold of adulthood and take the first tentative steps to go out and face the world. That's where Indian TV is today. Not Doordarshan, but Indian TV. Before we step out into this wonderland of images and sound, we need to realize that Doordarshan and Indian TV are not synonymous even though they had been so in the early days. But things had started to change by the late 1980s. And the process accelerated in 1991. Truly a great start for the decade of the '90s for all of us little folks who sit and watch the box. To consider Doordarshan as being TV is almost the same (perhaps not absolutely so) as considering India Today as being the magazine segmenti

An analogy which brings me to the point that may have got a little lost in all the high profile reports that are appearing with increasing regularity on the cable/satellite invasion of our 'air waves'. And that is this: TV networks can and should be considered as 'publications' on the air, and therefore need to be handled in a manner similar to magazines. They need to have an 'editorial' policy, an editor often titled as programmer, features department with specialist 'editors' and procedures, news division, circula-

tion or audience managers, etcetera. And, of course, advertising managers. In this ideal world, competitive networks would work to create audiences by matching programmes to audience profiles. And that this can generate viewing has been proved by recent research findings (source: Admar Cable View '91) which reveal that after noon and after 10 p.m. audiences were there, even though Doordarshan had never been able to get them to tune in. Before considering the challenges that multiple choices create for advertising, let's look briefly at what has been happening to TV viewing these past few years.

TV sets in use had increased dramatically-and are now estimated at 30 million plus. Doordarshan extended its broadcasting hours, not always very successfully as morning and afternoon viewing remained very low. Video viewing spread, especially among the better off with VCR and VCP being luxury priced. And then in the late 1980s, enterprising entrepreneurs (mostly in high rise intensive Bombay) launched India's very own brand of cable TV. Apartment buildings in adjoining plots were wired up, and the friendly neighbourhood cable operator tuned you into rather fuzzy sessions of pirated movies, both Indian and

foreign. Meanwhile, in border areas little booster units brought you programmes from Bangladesh in the east and Pakistan in the west. TV, you see, acknowledges no borders!

The move had started towards the creation of 'competitive' TV networks and one of the first to recognize this was the film world. Adopting the maxim 'if you can't fight them, join them', movie producers decided to license video rights. In turn, video companies licensed cable operation to 'broadcast' movies, etcetera. Advertisers and their agencies realized that a new medium had arrived, even though in a very nascent and unruly manner. Having already adjusted to using video news magazines and movies to carry their ads, they now started releases on 'cable' systems. As an aside, it is only in India, I feel, that advertisers could put viewers through the visual horror of watching videos with 'strip over' advertising, covering at times one-third of the screen, regardless of whether Amitabh is about to rescue or make amorous advances to Rekha. So the shifts had started. but only in bits and pieces. The real change was yet to happen.

But happen it did. In 1991, when CNN put us in the front row to watch a war in action. Suddenly, we got talking about satellite dishes, cable TV with multiple channels, CNN, STAR, BBC et al. And advertisers started to wonder what they should do about TV advertising. More specificially, about Doordarshan, a high cost medium involving crores of rupees—Rs. 300 crores in total and, for individual advertisers, a minimum of Rs. 50 lakhs if they were operating on a new product market.

Several studies have been conducted on the impact of TV. Admar's Cable TV 1991 studied the situation in the four major sectors—Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Madras. The findings reveal several interesting trends as they show to what extent cable TV changes people's viewing habits. They also reveal that the shift to cable is a growing phenomenon: in Bombay, when cable first appeared, penetration in households with a monthly income of Rs. 1501 was

23.4% by September 1991; in Madras 7.2%, in Delhi 6.5% and in Calcutta 3.2%. As expected, penetration was higher in higher income households in Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta. But surprisingly, it was the reverse in Madras. In number, middle class households formed the largest groups. And finally, forecasts for growth predict that between 150 to 200 homes will get 'cabled' each day.

L hat was in September 1991: since then, much has happened and it is now more than likely that the pace will pick up, STAR TV has arrived and offers multiple viewing choices. Asian Television Network (ATN) is on test and Pakistan is reported to be getting ready to beam via satellite. All this will mean that we've entered the real world of TV. A world where one doesn't just watch the 8.40 p.m. news, then the 9 p.m. serial and perhaps the 9.30 news or the Sunday morning 'blockbuster', the Hindi movies, and, not to be forgotten, Chitrahaar, but a world when we can see a news programme that takes us round the world; learn about different people and places, inventions and fashions, cooking and crafts and so on.

We're not there quite yet, at least not in 1991 when Admar studied the market, as at that time the most popular viewing was still movies. But what did come through loud and clear was that there are people who will watch TV at all times of the day and night provided you have the shows they want. And as more of this happens you will have advertisers re-evaluating this option and being able to find better matches between products advertised and audience profiles.

Another fall-out, and I suggest an important one, will be a change in Doordarshan's approach to 'software'. A term I have never been able to relate to TV programmes, as in my view it belongs to the world of computers.

It will I hope no longer be a question of doling out programmes to lists of approved producers and advertisers, but a process which involves the 'programmer' or editor in getting his network or magazines

with editorial material (programmes) which will appeal to the audience of the hour (who is at home at what time of what day is the target audience). Orders such as a recent one that states that no serials will be extended would die a natural death —do you know of any magazine that insists that popular features (Khushwant Singh's column for example) must only be run for 13 or 26 weeks! And that columns or stories that flop must be continued regardless! If Doordarshan does not realize that it is in the business of building viewership, then I'm afraid it is going to be tuned out of homes and edged out of advertisers' schedules.

linally, a word about sponsorships. The way they developed and entertained in India was somewhat unique because it did not seem to matter to the network whether the quality of the series remained high or not. It did to some extent to the advertiser who had bought viewership. What appeared to be happening was a handing over of the editorial prerogative of the network to outsiders. I can't imagine any magazine or newspaper editor allowing this to happen, especially when the time slot or positioning involved prime time, i.e. the best page in the paper. What I hope will happen is that sponsors will become smarter and so will the network. They will 'buy' only quality shows, such as the Gillette World of Sports, which appear on networks across the world. or the Hallmark Hall of Fame Special Productions which bring the best of the classics to the box.

And now a final thought to leave behind. The world is truly coming home to us via satellite-home to people in cities and towns, and soon I expect in villages too. For the innovative Indian entrepreneur will make the dish a familiar sight around the country. We must be ready to handle this opportunity and challenge with confidence. We have the talent—all we need is the freedom to use it. And fortunately, this is one freedom that will be difficult to fetter. Now at long last remote controls and multiple stations are making some sense—let's go cable watching and enjoy the shows, the ads, the sponsorships.

### An independent channel

SHOBHANA BHARTIA

NOW that the government has in principle (it's another matter if it lives up to it) taken a decision to permit the creation of an independent TV channel in competition with Doordarshan, it has become necessary to assess the viability of the various approaches to the realization of this objective. And viability here should mean not only financial self-sufficiency; but also fulfilment of the basic objective of this project i.e. the capability of the new TV channel to provide healthy competition to Doordarshan, thus serving the best interests of the viewers. Keeping these twin imperatives in view, this article attempts to appraise the relative merits of various alternatives available to the authorities.

Giving franchise of second channels in the four metros: The franchise of the existing second channels in Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Madras could be entrusted to either a single entity or to four different parties. The franchise could be either on a time-sharing basis with Doordarshan or for exclusive operation.

Firstly the operation of this franchise has to be financially viable. The combined advertising revenue of the second channels in the four metros was Rs. 3.51 crores in 1990-91. This amount is only 1.38% of the total advertising revenue of Doordarshan (Rs. 254 crores) for

this period. And, for the following reasons, it seems almost impossible to increase the revenue of the second channels to an extent which would meet the costs:

#### Ad Revenue from Four 2nd Channels (1990-91)

| <u> </u>                        |
|---------------------------------|
| (Rs. in lakhs)                  |
| All India 25,400                |
| 1. Madras 147                   |
| 2. Delhi 135                    |
| 3. Bombay 62                    |
| 4. Calcutta 7                   |
|                                 |
| Total for four 2nd channels 351 |
| 2nd channel revenue as %        |
| of all India gross=1.38.        |

Source: Audience Research Unit, Doordarshan.

\*The number of TV sets in these four cities adds up to 36 lakes, as against the total set population of 278 lakes for the entire country (about 13%). This means that the second channels will hold very limited attraction for advertisers. The situation becomes all the more adverse if the four channels are leased to different entities.

\*A very large percentage of the prospective consumers whom the advertisers would like to reach now reside in smaller towns and semi-urban areas. The producers of mass consumption goods are trying to capture these new parties.

#### Number of TV Sets in India

|  | (in lakhs) |
|--|------------|
| Total for the country                      | 278        |
| 1. Delhi                                   | 8.64       |
| 2. Bombay                                  | 10.94      |
| 3. Madras                                  | 5.97       |
| 4. Calcutta                                | 10 48      |
| m  |            |
| Total for 4 metros i.e. 13% of the country | 36.03      |

Source: ORG Survey.

Further, there will be a dichotomy in managerial and operational control. Then there is the question of supervising and controlling the existing production, operations and maintenance personnel. The same situation would obtain in the control of the hardware segment of these TV stations. Any dual control and overlapping of authority, which would be unavoidable, would lead to management problems.

Time-sharing on primary channel: In private parties sharing time with Doordarshan on the primary channel, the snags arising from dual control of infrastructure, production facilities and personnel management pointed out in the first alternative would apply with greater force. A variety of technical facilities are required in telecasting and problems would arise if these are handled by two separate agencies. The work ethos, procedures and system of reward and punishment in a government organization and a private enterprise are very different. Any arrangement based on sharing of facilities and manpower is not likely to succeed.

Lurther, Doordarshan would retain its prime-time slots and the low-viewership slots would be of lesser interest to the advertiser. It could be argued that a good programme would create its own niche and constraints of prime-time would not matter. This in practice is not so. In fact it is well established, based on extensive field surveys in the USA and other countries that 'people watch television when they can watch television'.

It is clear that except in exceptional cases, any programme tele-

cast outside the prime slot of 7 to 11 p.m. on weekdays will have low viewership. This is the slot which will be coveted by private enterprise, and which Doordarshan would not permit. Even if a private enterprise agrees to operate outside the prime-time slot and make use of idle time available on Doordarshan, only a total of one hour and fifty minutes in four different blocks are available from 7.00 a.m. to 11 30 p.m. A lot of Doordarshan time during the day is devoted to educational TV and other socially relevant programmes: it would be inadvisable to replace these with commercial TV.

Free-for-all: Government could allow one and all private applicants to establish an independent channel to cover a town, a number of townships or a region. An official authority could examine the antecedents and suitability of the applicant within defined parameters, before letting him set up the telecasting facilities.

If this approach is adopted, the country will be dotted with scores of privately owned transmitters operated by a multitude of franchise holders. This arrangement suffers from a crippling handicap. Television is a great guzzler of programmes. Any TV station which wants to make its presence felt, and thus attract ads, must stay on the air for a minimum of four to five hours daily. It costs at least Rs. 4 to 5 lakes to produce programmes of an hour's duration. Consequently, the TV station concerned must earn advertisement revenue of Rs. 15 to 20 lakhs a day to generate adequate software. Establishment and capital costs will be extra

#### Free Time on DD Channel-I

- At present the following vacant slots are available Monday to Friday:
- 8.45 to 9.00; 1245 to 1300; 1510 to 1600; 1700 to 1730 hrs.
- On Saturday: 0840 to 0900; 1240 to 1300; and 1700 to 1730 hrs.
- On Sundays no free chunk is available

It is just inconceivable that a TV station covering a town of half-amillion would be able to earn Rs. 1.5 to 2 million daily on a continuing basis from local advertisers. The situation is not materially altered even if 5 to 10 transmitters are networked, as their catchment area for ads will remain very limited. It can be appreciated that really big advertisers aim at national exposure. Local stations would only attract ads from the small fry. A local sweetmeat seller or a cloth merchant may advertise on such a station, but not the big entrepreneurs who account for the bulk of the advertising revenue. It may be well to remember that a private venture runs on self-generated income and not enthusiasm; and optimism is no substitute for financial prudence.

Moreover, networking is not so simple as it may appear on a superficial view. In fact it presents an almost insurmountable hurdle. Here, we are talking of interlinking at two levels. First is the grouping by the five or ten transmitters owned by a particular company. As microwave links in India have large gaps, it is not possible to use this mode for any extensive networking. Consequently, each company would have to network its transmitters through a satellite only. This means that each concern should have a dedicated earth station and a satellite transponder of its own. The cost of an earth station would be around Rs. 5 crores, and the transponder hire charges would come to another Rs. 4 crores per year. It is very doubtful if the government would ever agree to release the foreign exchange equivalent of Rs. 40 to 50 crores per year as rental for 10 to 12 transponders

For a dozen telecasting concerns, 12 transponders on one or more satellites which have their footprints covering India, are just not available at present. Even if some programmes are jointly produced and networked, each company would have to produce a number of programmes of local interest independently so as to create its own regional profile. It is totally beyond the capacity of the Indian market

to generate the sort of advertising revenue which can sustain such an array of private TV companies. Thus, in addition to being wasteful and non-viable, this free-for-all approach, whether confined to one town or to a small region, is not even feasible in view of the absence of back-up infrastructural facilities.

The consortium approach: A refined version of the free-for-all scenario is the consortium approach on the ITV pattern in the UK. Under this arrangement a number of private companies have been given territorial franchises for installing TV transmitters within their respective jurisdictions. Each company tries to attract as much advertising revenue as it can by maximizing the viewership of its programmes. With a view to reducing costs many programmes are produced jointly, or purchased from one another. Common programmes are shown by networking the participating companies over microwave links. (Incidentally, UK has recently switched over to the practice of auctioning franchises for various regions to the highest bidder, and this has jeopardized the existence of several leading private companies.)

he adoption of the consortium system by India has several pitfalls:

- (a) The practice of various competing entrepreneurs to join hands and work harmoniously for a common objective must have the backing of an established tradition and industrial culture for its success. In India, because of the predominantly individualistic approach, there is hardly any example of a major joint venture comprising even two or three partners which has made good. In actual working it would be difficult to apportion respective shares of cost of production or jointly produced programmes, or the royalty to be paid by various companies for a programme produced exclusively by one of them.
- (b) Unlike in the UK, various regions of India are unequally developed, and the potential of these regions to absorb consumer goods varies a great deal. For instance, the markets in Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and western UP, offer much

richer pastures to advertisers than the north-eastern states, as also Orissa and Bihar. As such there may be keen competition in some regions of the country, but others may not attract any worthwhile bidders. Some franchise holders would thus be able to produce better programmes than others due to their higher revenues. Cheap bidders may resort to telecasting poor and canned programmes which may not be in harmony with the regional culture and social mores of the concerned region. Such companies would also not be able to finance any programme of local interest and relevance, as no other company would buy them. Further, the unequal potential of various regions would make the exercise of cost-sharing for networked programmes difficult and controversial.

- (c) As already mentioned, the total advertising revenue of Doordarshan for 1990-91 was Rs. 254 crores. Since Doordarshan would continue to be the more pervasive TV network and some of its popular programmes would be either too expensive or specialized to be replicated by the private companies, it is clear that the new entrants would not, even with their best efforts, earn more than 40 to 50% of the revenue. It would be a real hand to mouth existence if a dozen consortium parties have to manage within the overall income limit of Rs. 10 to 15 crores per year. A natural consequence of such a tight situation would be that adequate funds would seldom be available for high class production and it will not be feasible to undertake bold and innovative experiments. It may be argued that the advertising revenue could be enhanced. This is possible only to a limited extent.
- (d) Another handicap of the consortium approach would be that owing to the ad hoc and fragmented nature of programme production arrangements and the need for each franchise holder to produce a number of items of purely local interest, an overall, well-defined personality profile for the entire system would not emerge. The daily telecasts by different companies would become a hotch-potch of ill-assorted programmes of unequal quality, with

no balance or direction in the product mix.

- (e) All the independent partners of the consortium will have to create their separate management and production structures. There will thus be unnecessary multiplication of administrative overheads.
- (f) There is also the technological snag about netwoking on such a large scale. ITV in the UK comprises 15 independent companies. With a much larger area and population, the number of franchise holders in India would also be fairly large, though the actual number makes no difference to the validity of our argument. Even if only six independent bidders are ultimately franchised, they would have to set up six dedicated earth stations and hire six transponders on some international satellite. Six spare transponders with their footprints covering the whole of India are not available at present.
- (g) It is important to note a basic difference between the networking situation in UK and India. Britain has highly developed and extensive microwave links and the franchise holders do not have to depend upon a satellite. This is not, as has already been pointed out, the position in India.
- (h) One effective solution to this problem could be to specifically design an Indian satellite with a sufficiently large number of transponders and have it launched by an international agency. But doing this would not be cost-effective and it could take up to seven to ten years.

Problems of monopoly, concentration of control, etcetera: There is a view that big newspaper owners should not be given a franchise within the zone of their dominance. This approach is based on a similar practice followed in some Western countries. However, it is always misleading to transpose foreign models on local situations. For instance, England, France and Germany have fairly homogenous cultures and social mores. Not so India. We have heterogeneity of an extreme nature. Here, if you ask The Hindu group to operate in the north, or The Hindustan Times

group to cover south India, both parties will be at sea, and the resultant product would be neither fish nor fowl.

Secondly, it is an established fact that TV has not replaced newspapers to any considerable extent. In India we have different newspapers with a dominant circulation in different parts of the country. Their vital role as major opinion leaders would not decline significantly if a TV channel owned by their rival group happens to cover their turf.

Thirdly, unlike newspapers, a TV signal pours down from the skies on every home and hearth. Television knows no geographical boundaries. Therefore, even if a particular newspaper from the north holds a franchise of transmitters in the south, its signal from the satellite would cover the entire country in any case. In fact, when you use a satellite transponder for transmission, the physical location of the earth station becomes irrelevant.

L he strongest argument against awarding a franchise to one party only is that it would create a monopoly. But how could there be a monopoly when this private channel would be constantly competing with its Big Brother, Doordarshan? The main reason for setting up a private channel would be to break the monopoly of Doordarshan. This is possible only if Doordarshan is pitted against a strong and financially viable rival. By giving franchises to numerous companies, we shall be confronting Doordarshan by a host of pygmies who are in no position to offer it any meaningful competition. The monopoly of Doordarshan will thus continue to be perpetuated and the main object of breaking it up would get aborted due to dubious and extraneous considerations.

The suggested alternative: It will be seen that the approaches just outlined are beset with many financial, managerial and technical lacunae. The votaries of free competition could argue that the contenders must compete and the weaker be allowed to die. This is unthinkable, given our scarce resources. With such an approach, large areas in the country may remain unser-

viced by any independent channel owing to their low ratings in the priorities of advertisers.

ndoubtedly, the consideration which should finally weigh in deciding this issue is the maximum public good. The creation of a nationwide second channel to provide healthy competition to Doordarshan and to offer wholesome and socially relevant entertainment to the viewers is a must. This is best ensured only when this channel is viable in financial terms, has a unified management structure and a coherent policy frame. It is possible only if it is owned and operated by a single entity within the guidelines and parameters laid down by the government. This will give two TV channels to the country. After all, the USA also has only three main channels. In fact, it would be laudable if India, with its much lower potential for advertising revenue, can sustain an independent channel in addition to Doordarshan.

A popular argument in favour of franchising a number of TV companies could be that this is somehow a 'democratic' method of settling the issue. This is rather deceptive. After all, the government is reported to have received almost 80 applications for setting up private channels and some criteria will have to be evolved for picking and choosing the most deserving candidates. So a number of aspirants will be disappointed in any case. And if the larger public good is to be the touchstone then, as argued earlier, the choice is best restricted to just one candidate.

If these arguments merit serious attention, the following factors may be most relevant in awarding the franchise: (a) experience in the management of a large mass-media organization; (b) a track record in terms of mature and responsible use of media, commitment to national objectives and entrepreneurial capabilities: (c) adequate financial resources for the creation of a network of transmitters all over the country, and the ability to support and nurse the project in its initial stages; and (d) a clean public image of fair dealing and ethical management practices.

### A case for cable

VINOD DUA

DESPITE the multiplicity and diverse nature of the internationally available broadcast channels, cable TV has come to stay. In India, it has assumed particular importance in the backdrop of a conspicuous absence of alternate channels. The Indian audience, starved as it has been of quality entertainment, has had to put up with mass reach 'masala' films devoid of educational or informational insight. This has, in fact, contributed to eroding the country's cultural ethos and value system. With the film industry's dominating market presence eclipsing all other entertainment avenues. film-makers and entertainment dispensers have gained unfairly from the grossly skewed situation.

Technological breakthroughs have taken us by surprise, rendering obsolete the very idea of control and authority. The country is witnessing today a most remarkable phenomenon: the maturing of economic democracy accompanied by the evolution of a very strong consumeriat. Issues of economic concern are subjects of discussion among the middle classes all over the country.

The time when the Indian consumer could not have dreamt of exercising his choice for essential commodities, what to talk of diverse entertainment forms, is now over. The market has reached a stage of maturity where, given the chance, the average Indian viewer would be able to discern quality entertainment from the fare currently being dished out by the movie moghuls and video pirates.

However, presently, people are experiencing an information crunch. A penchant for the latest ongoing events, happenings, issues, whether of proximal or distant (world-wide) concern, reveals that the Indian media industry is undergoing a metamorphical process of growth. People are increasingly becoming aware and assertive of their rights, no longer content with a prescribed thinking pattern. Opinions cannot be thrust upon them. The emergence of such pluralism in thought is indeed a cause to rejoice in our democratic society.

Cablecasting has numerous and tangible benefits to offer:

- \*It will generate employment for the rapidly expanding self-employed entrepreneurial youth in cities and towns.
- \*It will provide better quality and coverage of entertainment, sports and other events of news value.
- \*Retail and small advertisers will get an opportunity to advertise their products and services on cable network. This will thus contribute to increasing the market size.

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\*Cable TV channels would bring to fore many more manufacturers and marketers who would gain from advertising their products for given and specific audiences.

\*Cabling will prove to be an important source of revenue for the government as there will be an opportunity to collect licence fees.

\*It is indeed fortuitous that cable technology is already locally available in the country. It shall not call for high capital investment unlike in the case of broadcasting systems.

Cable TV can serve as a very vital instrument to cater to the changing trends in taste. Different target segments, thanks to the flexibility of cable, would now have access to different programmes at the same time. The concept of cable arose with the aim of providing entertainment. Moreover, a huge potential exists for enriching entertainment programmes with information, news features etcetera.

International trends run towards more interactive and participative business and consumer transactions. In an otherwise congested and overcrowded marketplace, interactive consumer marketing is the only way by which the variety of needs of the newly emerging consumeriat can be attended. This could, in fact, herald the evolution of an electronic department store hooking up marketers and customers from all over the world.

Over the last seven years, the number of cable networks has increased to more than 6000. As many as 2000 of these have been added in the last one year. The major reason has been the quality of coverage of international events which have been captured by satellite dishes. This indicates clearly that the Indian viewer is hungry for variety in programmes and is not dependent on masala Hindi movies.

Most of the cable operators are showing Doordarshan channels and hence propagate the official medium along with other infotainment channels. Some enterprising cable operators are even giving the facility of telecasting inter-city programmes to cater to the localised community groups, e.g., Calcutta Doordarshan programmes in select areas of Nagpur.

Cable growth in India has come about unregulated and unmonitored in the absence of requisite legislative provisions on the subject. The ambiguity in legislation and standardisation of the various activities in cablecasting is acting as a deterrent to the faster growth of this medium.

Telegraph is an exclusive domain of the central government, and as per Section 3(I) of the Indian Telegraph Act, cablecasting attracts the provisions of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885. But this could not be the intention of the legislature since telegraph and cable are distinctly separate subjects.

Rule 472 of the Indian Telegraph Rules, 1951 says that as long as the activity is confined within the premises and does not require crossing of the public right of way/roads, it will not be deemed as telegraphic activity. However, when the operation crosses the road, it becomes a telegraph.

he fact is that the signal or programme remains the same in either case. Crossing of the road should not result in making it a telegraphic activity. This appears to be a drafting anomaly in the present technological context. It would be quite in order if cablecasting is considered outside the scope of the Telegraph Act.

The ministry of telecommunication allows the installation of a dish antenna for private viewing. The licence so granted to the cable operators is supposedly meant for private viewership. Since technology has made obsolete the concept of authority and controls, it is desirable that dish antennae are formally allowed to be installed to receive programmes from both Indian and foreign sources.

All public exhibitions are under the purview of the Indian Cinematography Act. While cable is strictly not a public exhibition, to the extent that programmes are relayed over networks it has been subjected to censorship laws to eliminate programmes of doubtful moral values and anti-social character to whip up communal passions, riots, violence.

But government's apprehensions have no relevance to entertainment and business programmes which are purely entertainment-oriented and informative in nature and do not seek to convey any communal conflict or particular ideology. Hence all entertainment programmes, business programmes and such other programmes, which are related to the life-styles and personality development of human beings, should be kept outside the purview of censor laws.

As in the case of print media, producers and managers of video programmes and films may be subjected to a prescribed code of conduct. The onus should be placed on producers and managers (read editor/publisher of a newspaper) to conform to norms of quality and content.

Currently, cable operators are using inferior quality of cables, tapoffs, splitters and allied equipment. The method of drawing cables house to house and across roads is somewhat crude and leaves much to be desired. It leads to leakage in the signals carried on cable causing, in turn, distortion in Doordarshan signals. In order to ensure that the cable system does not interfere with the national transmission system, stringent norms and guidelines would have to be prescribed by the government.

The equipment presently being used by the cable networks limits the operations to within one to two kms of the head-end equipment. This has resulted in the emergence of an unmanageable spread of cable networks. While competition should be encouraged, the low technology inputs can lead to the entry of some unscrupulous operators who could use the system to propagate sex, violence, or religious fervour.

Technology needs to be upgraded to provide a reach of 30 kms so that even the major cities could be covered by one or two cable networks. The monopolistic fall-out of such a

step could be nullified by ensuring the availability of two to three channels on cable networks to other parties or professional producers. This will, other than promoting healthy competition, also provide us with more 'corporatized' and organized networks.

Here, it might be interesting to look at the international cable casting scenario, particularly at how it operates in the USA and UK.

#### US model

The cable industry in the United States is over seen by the Federal Communications Commission at the macro level while administration and licensing of the cable networks is looked after by each of the 50 states. There is no censorship of programmes relayed on cable networks as the onus for this falls on the cable network owner.

There are about 100 leading cable corporations handling cable operations in the USA. About 54% houses are covered by cable operations. The number of channels in many cases is more than 50. US cable networks are primarily subscription-oriented in the sense that cable operators earn more revenue from subscription fees than ad revenue. The total revenue in US is estimated to be in the order of USA \$ 15 billion or Rs. 40,000 crores.

There are certain regulations that cable corporations or operators are obliged to comply with:

- 1. To relay 'must carry' programmes such as non-commercial educational programmes and TV signals of networks within specified distances without any alteration in the quality of the programme. These requirements are of a mandatory nature.
- 2. To provide input selector switches to subscribers to offer the facility of choice between cable and off the air programmes and suggest measures to eliminate the interference of signals.
- 3. To offer employment opportunities to all without any discrimination in accordance with US employment policy.

- 4. To give equal opportunities to all segments and classes particularly politicians/leaders for relay of their programmes and campaigns on equal terms.
- 5. To employ the fairness doctrine in case of any personal attacks to enable reasonable response in a reasonable time.
- 6. To identify all advertisements with the sponsor or the advertisers and to instill a sense of accountability and responsibility of the advertisers with a specific ban on lotteries and games of choice:
- 7. To keep parity in tariff/rates for all consumer segments.
- 8. To make requisite provisions for receipt of public complaints.
- 9. To maintain prescribed records to satisfy the designated officer and the public at large as to the fairness and correctness of the operations.
- 10. To file annual reports in specified formats.

The gross revenue from the cable operations in the US is shared with the Corporation of Public Broadcasting @5% and @2% with municipalities of the gross revenue. Cable networks are obligated to maintain requisite accounts of their operations which are subject to public inspection.

All networks have the obligation to auction two or three of their channels to private entrepreneurs to relay their programmes to ensure inbuilt competition. The quality and content of the programmes relayed would, of course, be a responsibility of the producer and the broadcaster. No national or regional television station is allowed to operate cable operations.

It would appear that the US has exploited entrepreneurial investments in networks to relay developmental and educational programmes in the interest of the community at large. Cable networks have also been integrated in the US economy in the sense that cable network owners are required to provide employment opportunities in accordance with US policy.

#### UK model

The United Kingdom has a long tradition of public breadcasting. The entire cable operation in the country is monitored by an apex body called National Cable Authority. The authority, though regulatory in nature, is primarily engaged to make sure that promises given are kept. The regulations themselves are of a very light nature, and do not restrict cable operations. Instead, they seek to facilitate them in accordance with the prescribed guidelines.

The National Cable Authority is also the apex franchising authority. Initially franchise is given for a period of 15 years which is renewed for a period of eight years subsequently. The responsibilities of the authority are as follows:

- 1. To prescribe standards of excellence and quality in the area of programming, customer service, advertising and equipment.
- 2. To prescribe the eligibility criterion with particular emphasis on the integrity and character of cable franchises.
- 3. To monitor the MIS on cable corporations in the formats prescribed by the authority.
- 4. To set rules 'ensuring broader responsibility and accountability of the cable corporations.

Cable corporations and operators, on the other hand, are obliged to keep channels for 'must carry' programmes, and provide equal opportunities to all segments in terms of rates, tariffs, time on the channels, etcetera.

There is no censorship of programmes relayed on cable networks as the cable operator is expected to censor the programmes himself, visa-vis prescribed standards of programmes. Operators cannot of course carry programmes inciting violence, racial discrimination and speculative programmes.

The operation of the cable network is outside the scope of the Telegraph Act.

### Interview

#### with MIKE KHANNA

AS chief executive of Hindustan Thompson Associates Ltd, the country's largest advertising agency and the immediate past president of the Advertising Agencies Association of India, Mike Khanna is the quintessential adman. He has spent nearly twenty-five years in the business, all of them with HTA, J. Walter Thompson's Indian associate. Being with one agency, however, has not restricted his perspective; at public fora he has constantly demonstrated his ability to see the broader picture and his concern for the larger interest. Here Khanna shares his views on the air waves explosion and what it means for advertisers and image makers:

The past year has been a remarkable one for Indian TV audiences thanks to Star TV, CNN and the cable boom. What do you predict for 1992?

The process started over two years ago, though knowledge about what was happening dawned much later. When the Prasar Bharati debates were on, few people talked about technology. But it was obvious that it was coming. Conceptually, it started with CNN which gave a boost to the local cable operators' businesses. Indeed, cable and satellite are interlinked, for satellite transmission without cable support has limited scope in our country. Single households cannot afford to invest in a dish antenna. In the future though, technology will permit this for they are developing a dish, the size of a dinner plate, to which a single television set can be hooked on.

With Star TV, CNN and BBC, Indian viewers have a wider choice today. What will be the impact on Doordarshan's viewership?

They are bound to have a negative impact. How much will depend on technology. Star TV's objective is pretty clear: they want to build up viewership.

Isn't language the biggest constraint to achieving that? Yes and no. They can, for example, have tailormade programmes for India. Remember that the BBC is already well qualified to do a Hindi programme on radio. In Hong Kong, Star has a separate Mandarin channel. So a Hindi channel is quite possible. I reckon that viewership will be built up gradually over the next two years.

How have your clients responded to the new channels? There is certainly a lot of curiosity. The viewership is small, but it could be the right one for them. The National TV Survey which is currently underway is trying to assess the impact of Star and cable. But we will have to wait till March when the report is submitted to get a handle on this.

What scope does cable have as an advertising medium? Though cable has made an entry, it is not as yet significant enough. Advertisers of national brands

have no alternative to Doordarshan. Cable quality is poor both in terms of hardware and software. It's also highly disorganized. Today few cable operators have access to ad agencies. Cable will become a significant advertising factor when it goes into the organized sector and there is a single point to deal with. A parallel can be drawn here with cinema when earlier advertisers had to deal with individual cinema theatres. Then concessionnaires like Blaze came along.

Do you foresee Star TV picking up advertising revenue from India?

There's no doubt that it is a pan-Asian medium. However, while companies in Europe have already geared up their operations for a unified Europe, that's not happening here in Asia. In Europe there is a clear pan-European strategy. For example, JWT has an entity called JWT Europe and individual country offices are treated as branches. I don't think marketers here have put their act together. Companies just don't see Asia as a unified market.

The main hurdle in India is the foreign exchange restriction. Only foreign exchange earners like banks, hotels and airlines can advertise. So right now it's a non-starter.

Will Doordarshan see a drop in its revenues then? We have lots of local brands and they will continue to dominate the local channels. The highest viewership of programmes has been recorded in India. Take the Bill Cosby Show which is so popular in the US; it has a viewership of 55 million. Here in India we have a captive audience of 250 million. Cable has already begun to erode Doordarshan's viewership. Though the situation is as yet quite fluid, the broad trends are there.

What, then, is likely to be the fate of print as an advertising medium?

Television and print have two distinct roles. Classified, retail, financial and corporate advertising will always be there for print. Newspapers changed their look in response to TV and magazines continue to attract product ads. Television has added to the growth of advertising, it didn't replace print.

Indian admen have expressed their anxiety about the fact that if commercials go international, that would be a setback to their professional growth. Do you gasee?

We seem to be afflicted by the not-invented-here syndrome! No doubt there will be some common Asian campaigns. As a low-cost production centre and with the creative talent that we have, India could in fact play a lead role. Countries like Thailand and Indonesia, in comparison, have poor production facilities.

(Interview conducted by Nazneen Karmali).

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# Document

THE announcement of government's intention to offer broadcasting rights to suitable organizations in order to provide competition to the government-owned TV and radio channels and thereby offer more choice to the viewers/listeners marked a major change in its broadcasting policy. Not surprisingly, is generated a lot of controversy and interest throughout the country in the practical possibilities of such a change.

A special committee—the Varadan Committee—was appointed by the government on 3 September 1991 to study the various aspects of this proposal and make suitable recommendations. What follows are extracts from the report submitted by the Varadan Committee to the government after it finished its work in October 1991:

Broadcasting has generally been perceived the world over as a powerful medium for social and cultural change. It is also an effective instrument for economic and educational development....Radio listening or TV viewing has become an integral part—practically a habit—of modern life.

The fact that (their) programmes simultaneously reach a large section of people inevitably creates a psychological bond amongst those exposed to a particular kind of programme such as music, sports, plays, etc. This can, and has been, a ready foundation for building up common values amongst members of a society.... No country in the world...can afford to ignore the crucial part played by radio and television on the minds and feelings of its people.

Doordarshan and All India Radio have, over a period of time, developed an enviably good network covering almost the entire country. . . . While there is bound to be legitimate criticism regarding the quality of programmes put out by both media, it cannot be denied that they occupy a prominent place in the attention of the country.

Introduction of commercial advertisements on these two media has clearly demonstrated the reach and the impact of these media. There are far more programmes and sponsors for these programmes on Doordarshan than can be accommodated. Simultaneously, foreign TV stations have started beaming programmes through satellites which can be picked up directly by dish antennae in different parts of the country....this development has some disturbing implications. No country can let some foreign agency decide what kind of programmes should be broadcast to the people of that country. At the same time, it is neither desirable nor feasible to stop these transmissions or ban their reception. One wholesome way of counteracting the likely ill-effects of such programmes would be to wean away the viewers by more imaginative and relevant programmes.

India is a country with sound democratic traditions and the right to express different views responsibly has always been held in respect. With the growing popularity of the electronic media, there has been a feeling that there should be greater scope in this media for expression of different views on political and other matters of current interest. The existence of a single official channel for news is, in this context, being seen as singularly inadequate. Setting up of more channels to be operated by nongovernmental bodies is also seen as a means of creating a lively competition between them leading, hopefully, to an improvement in quality of broadcasting programmes.

...(However) broadcasting in India has essentially been informed by developmental and public interest objectives. This is very important in a country where there is large scale poverty and illiteracy....in the Indian context, broadcasting rights in the hands of unscrupulous elements could lead to very undesirable effects on the society. Moreover, establishment of additional channels would involve substantial investments...The question of according priority to the further development of the broadcasting system would, therefore, have to be carefully considered in the context of the planned economic development of the country.

Advertising on the electronic media has come to stay. It is expected that new channels in non-governmental hands would be sustained only by advertisement revenue.

... While all indications are that the broadcasting system of our country needs to be developed further in the light of the changing technological and social trends in the world, it is necessary that the new sys-

tem...(ensures)...that the expansion is on lines that are consistent with national interests.

The issue that has to be faced in planning the development of new channels is to decide whether such expansion should be driven by the market forces or should be based on an assessment of what is needed for the society.

The next important question... is as to what type of non-governmental agency should be set up to run the new channel. Government has announced its intention to offer such rights to 'public corporations'. The intention is that the management of the nongovernmental agency should be broad-based to represent a wide spectrum of stake-holding and its share-holding made freely accessible to the public... to ensure that the interests of all segments having stakes in the broadcasting sector would be adequately protected. Another desirable safeguard...is to have certain cross-media restrictions, so that owners of newspapers and magazines having circulation and influence within their specified geographical area or across the length and breadth of the country are not given licence to broadcast either in the area of circulation of their relevant newspapers/magazines or in the entire country. Another suggestion is that such rights should be given to Trusts, non-profit organisations such as universities, educational institutions, cultural organisations, cooperatives etc.

Expansion of broadcasting network is relatively capital intensive. The costs are variable and are dependent on factors like cost of land and buildings, topography and other infrastructural facilities including the antennae towers. The current policy of the government is to discourage dependence on government funds. A system which depends least on government source of funding would be most appropriate. It is therefore necessary to ensure that these new channels are commercially viable and at the same time are responsive to social needs.

(There are) various routes through which the present system can be changed...

Leasing out time chunks: ...in the existing channel, a specific time chunk can be given to the licencee who would be responsible for the content of the telecast over the transmitter during the allotted time chunk. The licencee would also be responsible for collecting advertisements and managing the programme.

Leasing out an existing channel: Another suggestion is to retain the primary channel of AIR and Doordarshan and lease out only the second channel wherever it exists, so that the public broadcasting functions can continue to be carried out on the primary channel. Since the second channel of Doordarshan has a limited coverage in terms of area, the competition will perforce be limited to a small geographical area.

Operation of transmitters on a regional basis: Yet another route can be to give the licence to an agency

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or a consortium of agencies to set up and operate a series of additional TV/Radio transmitters in different regions of the country under which they can transmit different programmes over regional transmitters and network them at some specified time of the day for national broadcast. This would meet the growing aspirations for reflecting the cultures of different parts of the country through the electronic media.

Licensing TV/Radio transmitters for local transmission:...licence can be given to set up TV/Radio transmitters in a particular station for local transmission in different stations of the country. Such licencees can of course come together for networking for specific national broadcasts. It would, thus, combine the need for reflecting the local aspirations with the broader purpose of a common programme for a region or the country as a whole.

Centralisation and leasing of transmitting infrastructure: Instead of giving a licence to an agency to set up and run a channel, one could conceive of a model in which all transmitting infrastructure—existing and planned—can be vested in a central authority who will be responsible for its management. This authority will lease out transmitting infrastructure to various licencees. This option of one central authority holding all the hardware will enable Prasar Bharati to be rid of a heavy overhead and allow its programme personnel to devote their entire energies to software production. This arrangement would, however, imply an important departure from the provisions of the Prasar Bharati Act.

Leasing of a transponder. This option of hiring a transponder for satellite based broadcasts is dependent upon the availability of additional S-band transponders in 1992-93 in INSAT. However, possibility exists of leasing transponders on other geostationary satellites like ASIASAT. The Committee understands that in the globally agreed Plan (1977) for Broadcasting Satellite Service under the aegis of International Telecommunication Union (ITU), India has got allocation for 48 DBs channels in Ku band, which have great potential for exploitation by broadcasting systems covering very large areas and may suit, in particular, the large variety of programme needs of the country.

No system can survive unless it is financially viable. At the same time, the committee has recommended that certain requirements regarding quality, content of programmes, etc., be imposed. The way the advertisement market would behave when these new channels operate is perhaps somewhat difficult to forecast. It is, therefore, very important that a potential licencee makes a sound judgement about the viability of his proposal before offering to set up a channel.

The Committee has also considered the view expressed by some individuals that since the proposed competition is only for the Prasar Bharati, the new system should come up only after Prasar Bharati

starts functioning and stabilises itself. The Committee notes that the Government has declared on the floor of the parliament that it was committed to bringing in Prasar Bharati as well as offering broadcasting rights to public corporations. The Committee has recommended... the need for comprehensive legislation and monitoring systems to lay down guidelines for the new channels. All this preliminary process is bound to take time. The Committee, therefore, recommends that the preliminary work relating to setting up of new channels should proceed, part passu, with the work of establishing Prasar Bharati.

The Committee, after careful deliberation, hereby recommends the following:

- 1. Subject to viability of operations, preference should be given to setting up new TV/Ràdio channels in different parts of the country for regional broadcasts. These transmitters can, over a period of time, link up suitably either by forming a consortium or by entering into suitable arrangements amongst themselves. Such a link-up would provide an interregional network.
- 2. a) Simultaneously, the second Doordarshan channel in the four metropolitan cities can be leased out to suitable licencees.
- b) Also simultaneously, additional radio channels including FM stations, wherever available, may also be similarly leased out.

These actions...should be taken only after suitable legislation is passed.

- 3. The option to permit one agency or consortium to set up a series of transmitters in the country will...rank only next to the option of permitting a number of licencees to set up different TV/Radio transmitters in the country.
- 4. The Committee does not recommend leasing out a particular chunk of time from an existing TV/Radio channel.
- 5. The option of a licencee leasing a transponder on a satellite for satellite-derived direct broadcast would perhaps be appropriate for developmental or educational telecast...as of now there is no such spare space segment available. As and when one becomes available, the government can take an appropriate decision.

A central authority to own the transmitting infrastructure for leasing out to various licencees, including Prasar Bharati, was conceived in the context of the planned development of hardware for broadcasting purposes....fragmentation of transmitting infrastructure and programme transmission may create problems of management and it would be preferable to have an integrated management either in Prasar Bharati or with the licencees....In order to mitigate the initial handicap of the licencees in

setting up the transmitting infrastructure and the need to bring in programme variety, it would be appropriate if only the transmitting infrastructure of Doordarshan's 2nd channel and an extra channel of AIR are divested for leasing to potential licencees. Future investments in transmitting infrastructure would be done by both Prasar Bharati and licencees from their own resources and there is no need to establish any central authority for owning and leasing transmitting infrastructure.

After the Government decides on the approach, detailed guidelines regarding eligibility of an applicant and the procedure of selection have to be formulated. The most suitable arrangement would be to set up a public body under the law to dispense such licences. Selection should be done by an independent authority of stature and that the process of selection should be fully transparent. This authority could be called the Broadcasting Council of India (BCI). The Chairman and members of the BCI should be eminent public men with unimpeachable probity. In particular, the Chairman should be a person who has the qualifications required for appointment as a judge in the Supreme Court of India.

Broadcasting rights should be given to public bodies such as universities, well-managed cooperative institutions, Trusts etc., whose primary objective is in the area of education, culture or communication. In the regions where such organisations apply for licences, they may be given preference over other applicants provided they meet all the eligibility criteria.

After careful study of various broadcasting systems in the world, and also based on its discussions with many specialists in the field, the Committee recommends the following set of guidelines:

\*The licencee will fully conform to the advertisement code which is now applicable to All India Radio and Doordarshan and to future modifications therein.

News, current affairs and other programmes on this channel will not be such as to offend the religious sentiments of any group.

- \*The programmes, including news and current affairs should not in any way be prejudical to the sovereignty and integrity of India; security of the state; friendly relations with foreign states; public order; decency or morality or of such nature as will be likely to involve defamation or contempt of court or incite the commission of any offence.
- \*Not more than ten percent in terms of time of the programmes broadcast by this channel can be imported from abroad.
- \*The channel must carry at least for 20% of its broadcasting time, programmes considered by the Broadcasting Council to be socially relevant and necessary for developmental purposes.

\*The channel shall carry such programmes of importance to the nation as may be directed by the Government from time to time.

\*The programmes broadcast by the channel should not be the means for furtherance of the interests of any political party.

\*While dealing with any matter of controversy, the programmes shall present all points of view in a fair and impartial manner.

...There should be an arrangement by which a credible and autonomous body assesses continuously the quality of the programmes put out by the existing and the new channels. ... When the time comes for renewal of licence the track record in terms of quality would certainly be one of the criteria for appropriate decisions.

The Prasar Bharati Act, 1990 contains a provision (sections 14 & 15) regarding the setting up and functioning of the Broadcasting Council. The Council shall consider complaints against any particular programme broadcast by the Prasar Bharati Corporation and give its recommendations. The Prasar Bharati Board is to consider these recommendations and take appropriate action. The Prasar Bharati can also be directed by the Broadcasting Council to broadcast its recommendations with respect to a complaint. We recommend, therefore, that the provisions regarding the Broadcasting Council are appropriately taken out of the Prasar Bharati Act and placed as part of the legislation for the purpose of the new broadcasting system.

(There should) be a single statutory/autonomous body known as the Broadcasting Council of India to perform the functions in respect of the management of the new broadcasting system. This body will also perform prescribed functions in respect of Prasar Bharati as provided in the Act...as against the option of Government issuing licences for a new channel, (this same body) should be vested under the law with the powers to do so.

The new channels shall be governed by certain guidelines regarding their programmes....there should be an arrangement for monitoring the programmes to ensure that they conform to guidelines. We recommend that the Broadcasting Council of India be that agency.

Sub-section 1 of Section 4 of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 empowers the Government to license any person for operating a 'telegraph'. This provision has been interpreted to mean that Government can give new broadcasting licences. Since, for the first time, Government has announced its intention to enable non-governmental agencies also to operate broadcasting systems and since this new policy would require a comprehensive legal frame for proper implementation...a new legislation (needs to) be enacted (based on the Committee's recommendations) to govern the setting up and operation of broadcasting channels in India.

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15th March is celebrated every year as World Consumer Rights Day. The theme suggested by the International Organisation of Consumers Unions (IOCU) for Consumer Day, 1990 is "The Right to Consumer Education".

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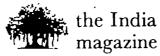


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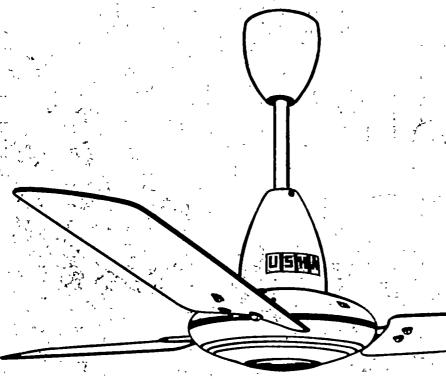
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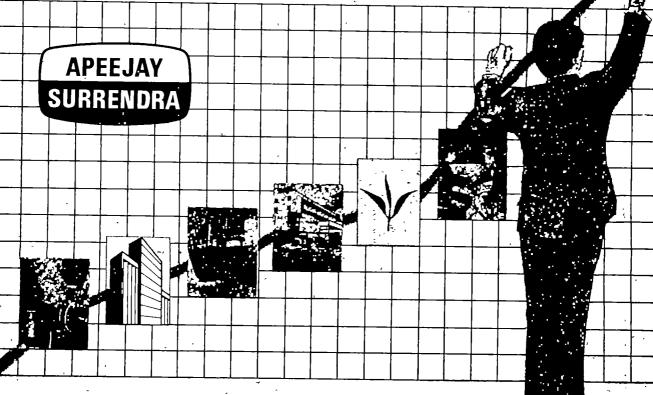
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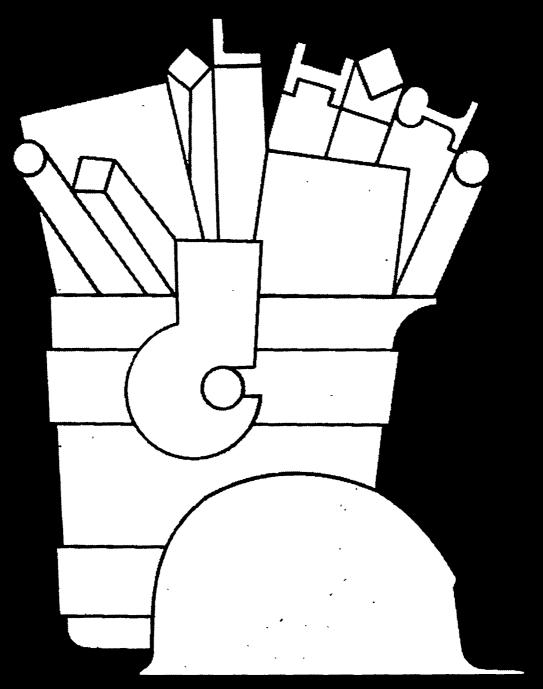


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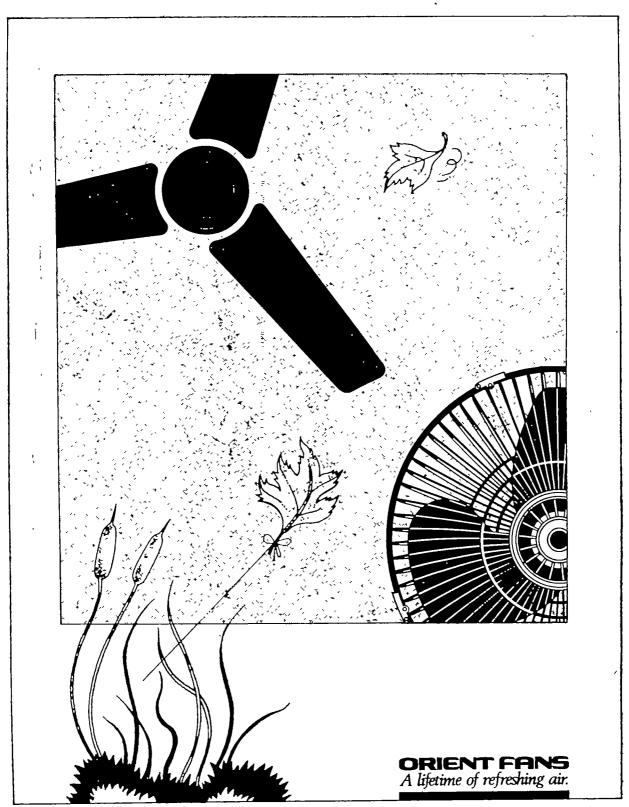
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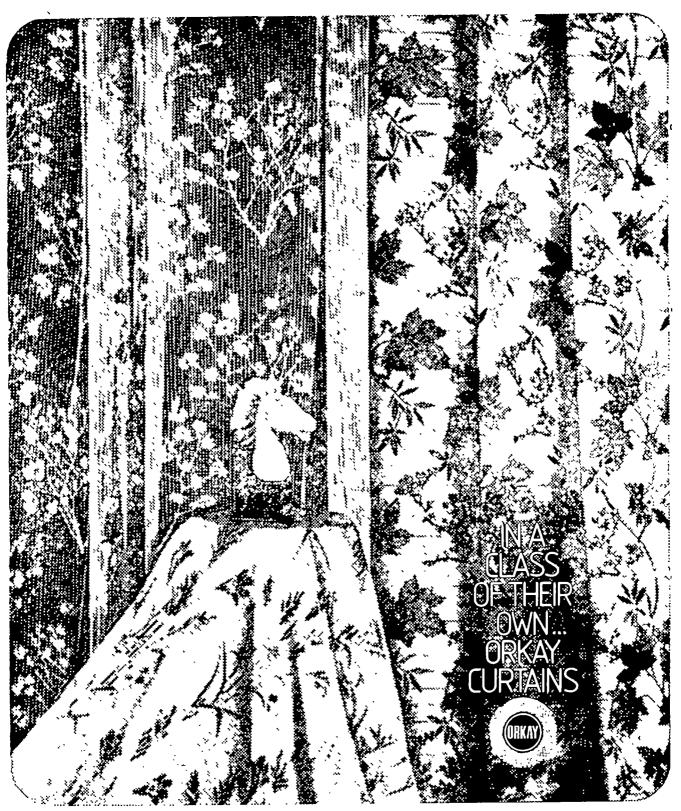
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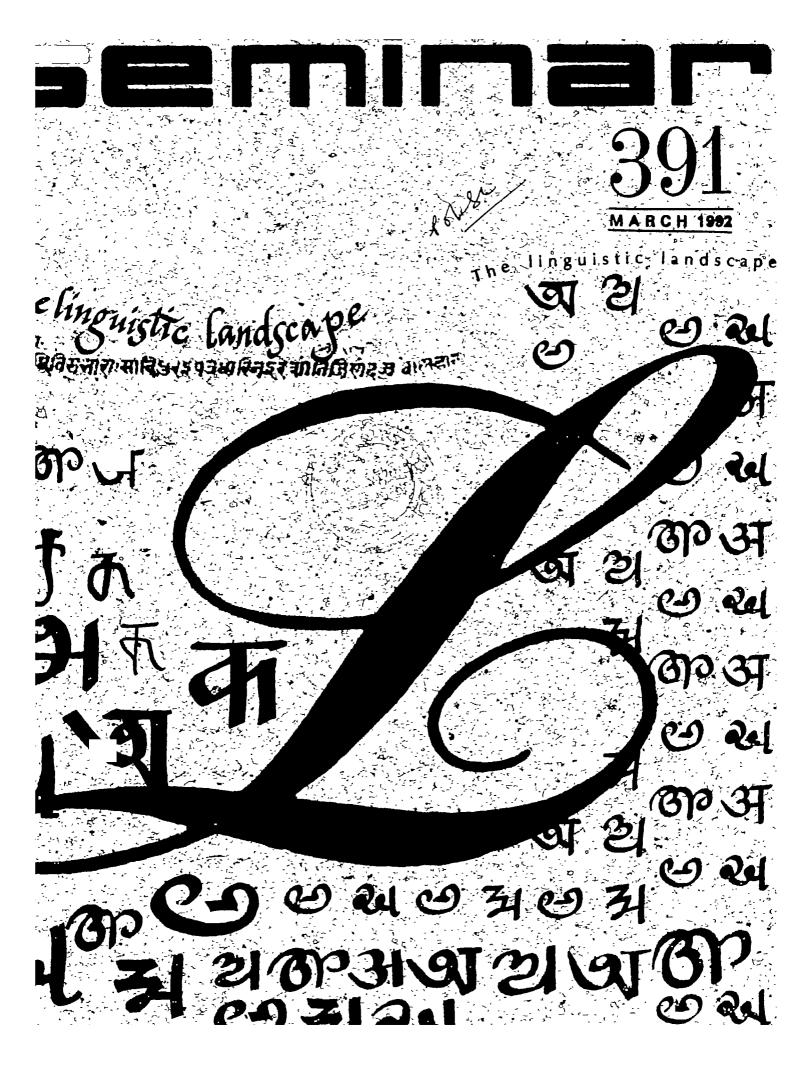


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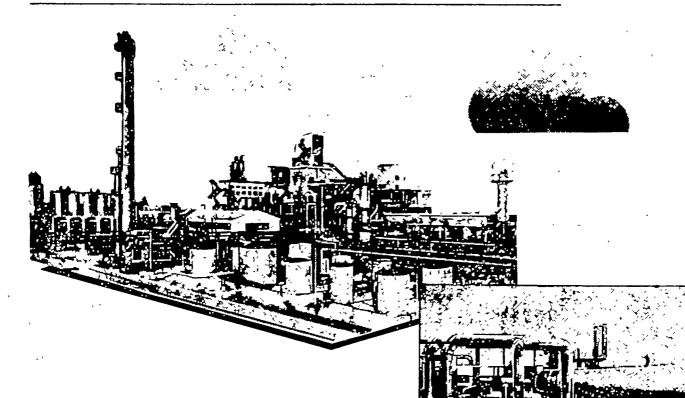
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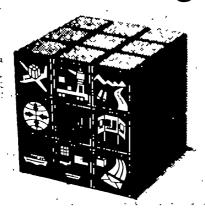
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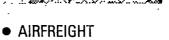
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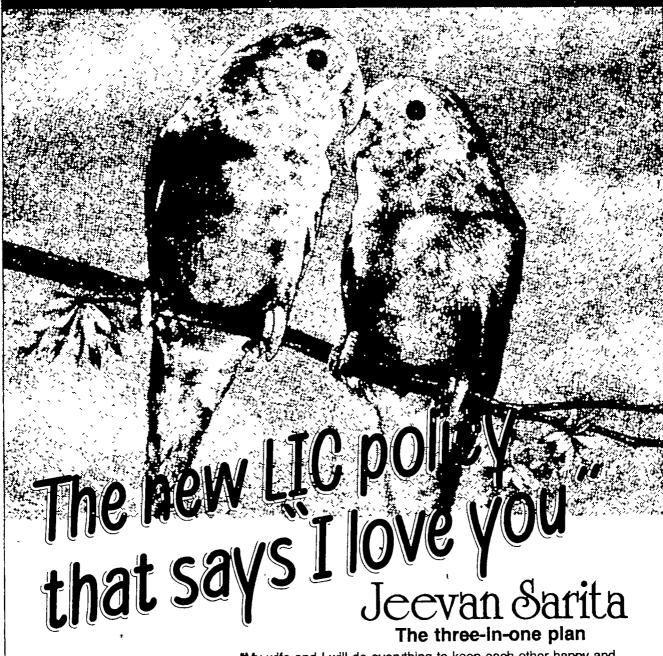


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COVER
Designed by Madha Chowdhury of
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# The problem

ALMOST everyone has a theory about language. As members of the human community each one of us 'knows' a language, often several languages, from the inside. This situatedness, this ensconcement within a linguistic space which we take as our 'own', gives many of us the confidence to address certain fundamental questions, however hesitantly. In India, where linguistic complexity is the *stne qua non* of our polity, it is especially difficult to avoid encounters with such issues in our day-to-day existence.

What is a language, how is it to be taught, why is it so often socially contentious? These are questions on which lay people hold fledgling theories and firm opinions, as do trained linguists. Only with linguists, the preference is the other way around—their theories are firmly held but their opinions, alas, waver. Discussing the status of linguistics as a discipline, the linguist James McCawley emphasized just this point when he provocatively entitled one of his books Thirty Million Theories of Grammar. In other words, we endlessly invent explanations of language, carry in our heads linguistic resonances—that is the human condition.

Linguistics, a discipline in search of a (technical) language to describe (ordinary) language, simply

formalizes this more general preoccupation with the words/world relationship. Narratives about the origins of language are part of Mayan mythology, of an ancient Indian repertoire which explains the origins of script (Devanagari) and the sacredness of syllables (Om), of the Biblical story which accounts for linguistic divisiveness (Babel). In the earliest and most potent stories across cultures, we find examples of linguistic theorizing, of the search for explanations.

To turn from those first conjectures to contemporary linguistics and its relevance in the Indian context, I begin with an anecdote. A couple of years ago, interviews were being held as usual at the Centre for Linguistics and English, Jawaharlal Nehru University, for entry into the M.Phil course. Among the candidates was a young man from Nagaland and we routinely asked him, as we asked everyone else, what his native language, his mother-tongue, was. His reply, which I remember almost verbatim, still has the power to shock me. Nyali from Nagaland answered with a single, stark sentence: In my state, we have no language.

What was Nyali's state, that it had no language? In my reading of psycholinguistics, I had of course come across the notion of linguistic deprivation. I

12

was familiar with accounts of wolf-children, reared without access to human language, and of the more recent case of Genie, an American child, locked up in a room for thirteen-and-a-half years, and absolutely deprived of human company. Genie never learned to speak 'normally'. Yet, Nyali's case was very different. He was not obviously 'deprived' in the sense that Genie was. It was not his use, or knowledge, of language that was damaged. Rather, it was his 'theory' of language, his idea of the essential elements that go into the making of a language, that seemed impoverished.

Of course, it is simple, at one level, to work out what Nyali meant. English is the official language in the state of Nagaland, and the Naga languages use the Roman script when necessary. However, also inherent in Nyali's utterance is a wholly distorted conception of language, one that has no cultural affiliations and one that reifies literacy. If a language does not have a script, it does not qualify as a language, it is only a 'dialect'. To my mind, nothing could be more theoretically as well as ideologically unsound than this position, yet it is accepted without rebellion by Nyali and others like him, so great is the violence done to oral, spoken traditions in the modern Indian state.

According to the Guiness Book of Records, the world total of languages and dialects still spoken is about 5000 of which some 845 come from India'—a good sixth: But only twenty-odd of these 'languages and dialects' have scripts. Even fewer have national viability and power. This has led to a supremely ironic situation in our country. As Indians, we accept unproblematically that language is so important a component of identity in India that people are willing to die and kill on behalf of their several languages, to engage in 'language riots' given the slightest provocation. At the same time, many of us also subscribe unselfconsciously to Nyali's belief—we do not really possess any language to fight over, or rather. we lack the power over language that a language of power as Hindi or, English might give us.

The linguistic skirmishes to which we have become so used in India recall for me those famous lines in *Dover Beach* where Arnold surveys the desolate land-scape of his country:

...which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath neither joy, nor peace, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain,

Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, Where ignorant armies clash by night.

And 'Matthew Arnold in a sari' is of course the metaphor describing the transfer of English to India, because it captures so pithily the incongruity that is an essential part of indigenization in the colonial set-up. As an erstwhile student of English literature, I have puzzled over the ease with which we consume English/Western culture and have come to the unsatisfactory conclusion that we easily assimilate countries, continents even, that come to us within the covers of a book, prepackaged in the elite institutional mail. English, all said and done, is still regarded by us, to judge from our university textbooks, as the language of Shakespeare, Keats, Eliot etcetera. Its masters are elsewhere, its minions here; that is the lesson which comes from any language inherited via a colonial superstructure.

However, the problem before the serious Indian linguist today is not to pronounce on whether English with its colonial burden is here to stay. This is a patently false concern, best left to political players. English is obviously not going to go away, given the vested interest of the Indian elite in it, as well as the wider world scenario. What committed linguists need to do instead is to deflect attention as far as possible away from 'standard' English to any of the 844 other Indian 'languages and dialects'. That is their task, as Indian citizens whose object of study is language, India counts as one of the most exciting linguistic areas a professional linguist could hope to be in, and this is certainly so not because of but in spite of the dominance of English in this country.

Since linguists primarily study not literature, the 'high' manifestations of a culture, but language as it is used by everyone, identifying their descriptive domain poses particular challenges for them. Kurukh or Kashmiri or Kharia—for a linguist these are first and foremost spoken languages whose unspecified boundaries must be demarcated by identifying the unique features of their phonology, morphology, semantics and syntax. This is no easy task since all over India, except for well-defined pockets, 'languages' tend to imperceptibly fade into neighbouring 'dialects'.

Further, the linguist's perception of the language she is describing may sharply conflict with the 'insider's' theories about his own language. One person's Oriya may be another's Bangla, so to speak. Our own culture comes to us in scraps and fragments, it is an amalgam of casual conversations and reading, much harder to piece together than the hardbound colonial canon, which entitles us to such major privileges. A language, English or any other, encodes our deepest prejudices, our judgements of literary 'merit' our ideas about the 'superiority' of one language over another, even of one way of speaking over other ways.

Could either of the two main perspectives available today within modern linguistic theory enable us to articulate more clearly the vexed distinctions

between 'language' and 'dialect' in terms of their relation to cultural power?

The first of these linguistic modes I shall call the cognitive paradigm and the second the communicative paradigm. The central version of the cognitive paradigm today is the model of generative grammar proposed by Noam Chomsky, although I should mention that Panini is also credited with having developed in the 5th century BC a mnemonics that could effectively be used to produce the phonological and grammatical structures of the prakrits as well as Sanskrit. Perhaps he was the first generative grammarian who was able to show how a finite number of rules could produce infinitely many language structures.

Chomsky raises the further question, which he refers to as Plato's Problem—how is it that with so little evidence, only shadowy inklings, do we know so much? Translated into contemporary idiom, this means—how is it that children, no matter what their culture, find it so difficult to master simple motor skills like wielding a pencil or riding a bike, yet pick up the whole complex grammar of a language by the age of four or five, especially when the evidence they get as input from their parents is so fragmentary? Chomsky answers this conundrum by arguing that language is an innate human ability that distinguishes us from other species and that children are pre-programmed to learn language, they already have the basic rules in their heads. On this universalist view, (a) all the languages of the world share certain basic structural features; (b) dialects and languages have the same theoretical status since they both provide evidence for linguistic universals; and (c) cultural factors intersect only superficially and uninterestingly with linguistic features.

Explanations of language universals are quite distinct from cultural descriptions. Problems of power belong in the domain of the more 'social' social sciences, while linguistics remains 'a branch of psychology' (Chomsky, 1965). To Nyali, Chomsky or Panini might say: Script or no script, language is your birthright. English, after all, is just another version of Ao, Angami, Nagami.

If the Chomskyan cognitive paradigm attempts to account for the fecundity of language production, the communicative paradigm tries to account for the variety of linguistic perception. Underlying the communicative model is some version of the Whorsian hypothesis, which states that while different languages may (or may not) be similarly structured, they certainly describe the same world in radically different ways.

Supporters of the relativist Whorsian stance would point to evidence from the terminologies of colour, kinship, food, metaphor and such well-attested cultural domains and argue that, for example, although we all have the same visual abilities, some languages train their speakers to recognize only two distinctions of colour—light and dark—some languages pick

out five colours and ignore other distinctions, some have names for upto eleven colours. Depending on our language, we perceive the physical spectrum of colour in set ways.

Similarly, our languages may train us to see the world as closely packed with rishtedar, kinsfolk, as in Hindi or Chinese or relatively sparsely peopled with kin, as in English. As relativists, we would be addressing what Chomsky has dubbed, as opposed to Plato's, Orwell's Problem—How with so much evidence, so many instances of Doublespeak, Differenthink, etcetera, do we know so little? How are we culturally hoodwinked? Within the communicative perspective: (i) languages and dialects are primarily indicators not of linguistic universals but of social groups and status; (ii) our perceptions of the world in relation to ourselves are radically affected by the languages we use to address others and that others use to address us; (iii) culture and language are profoundly interconnected in the area of perception.

To Nyali, a relativist like Quine might say: the definition of 'dialect' depends on social, not purely linguistic criteria. If you believe that a script 18 a necessary condition for a dialect to qualify as a language, then this belief about the power of scripts is subject only to internal social change. Linguistic arguments will do little to change the cultural presuppositions embedded in your language.

For the Indian linguist, no simple choice is possible between the universalist cognitive mode and the relativist communicative one. She is in the situation of the fly-in-amber. India's linguistic diversity offers such an embarrassment of riches that every hypothesis is buried under a weight of evidence. For this reason, Indian linguists have before them a particularly onerous task. They not only must accomplish the Griersonian task of recording vocabularies, grammars, speech patterns across India, they must also discover theories that fit, that sensitize the researcher.

Every one who calls herself a linguist in this country has had to face the question—not once but many times—how many languages do you know? In the Indian context, this is by no means an absurd question, but it is one which every man is as qualified to answer as the linguist. The linguist should rather be asked—how many theories of language have you invented/discarded and most important of all, subverted, in the last forty-eight hours? Her answer to this question should decide where she stands on both the question of cognition and that of communication.

At the heart of the cognitive paradigm is the concept of grammar; at the core of the communicative mode is the notion of conversation. Grammars are internalized, singular, arbitrary. Conversations are overt, dyadic, interdependent. Traditionally, linguists in India, from Panini to William Jones, have concentrated on the grammatical description of lan-

guages and dialects. They have worked within a grammar-based paradigm, although sometimes with an inspired work like Bhartrhari's Vakyapadiya theories of grammar have come excitingly close to being theories of text. On the whole, the goals of linguistic theory have been to observe, describe and explain phenomena in language, which seem 'invisible' to language users. Indian linguists currently must address the task of making the many invisible languages of India, and their hidden characteristics, visible to the Indian public.

Linguists are unlike many social scientists in their perverse resolve to regard language as being of interest not so much because it serves the purposes of certain social groups but because it is a faculty common to all members of the human species. The forms of language that fascinate linguists because they are universal, common denominators of human ability are precisely the forms that appear invisible to social analysts. The Hindi litterateur, Nirmal Verma has written about the invisible as a psychological phenomenon, an apprehension of cultural 'wholeness and sacredness'; linguists tend to examine the formal characteristics of quite another sort of invisibility. This phenomenon is invisible not because it is spiritual but because it is so absolute and apparently mundane a part of our lives that it passes unnoticed. Much of our everyday interaction with our families, our neighbours and acquaintances consists of this kind of language. It is through an examination of such ordinary phenomena that we come to realize that the reciprocal relations between language and culture may be most extensive exactly where they are least obvious.

As Madhu Kishwar has somewhere said, being Indian is not simply a matter of slapping on a bindi and wrapping on a sari; indeed these visible signs of culture are in some sense superficial because they are the most easily mimicked and appropriated. Or, to put the case somewhat differently, we easily grasp that the grand forms of language such as literature and drama, however popular or patrician, are vehicles of cultural expression; we recognize their symbolic value. But we are so submerged in ordinary language that we find it difficult to treat it as a well-defined formal object. Yet instances of everyday language responding flexibly to social conditions are evident all about us.

Let me illustrate with one example which will be familiar to everyone in Delhi. We know that the pronominal systems of several Indian languages have a three-tier honorific heirarchy of address (aap, tum, tu) and that these pronouns classically agree with the verb endings of sentences (aap aayiye, tum aao, tu aa). However, in Delhi today it is quite common to hear utterances such as 'aap khao', 'aap baith jao' etcetera, where the pronoun of highest respect combines with the verb-ending appropriate to equals, peers.

The educated lay response is to describe this usage as 'incorrect' but linguists would argue that these forms are the result of two dialects of Hindustani (Hindi and Haryanvi) fusing to meet the demands of the urban social context. Haryanvi speakers who use only the 'tu' or 'tum' have incorporated the 'aap' of Hindi into their speech, while Hindi speakers use the verb-ending appropriate to 'tum' as a borrowing from the Haryanvi. This mutual and unselfconscious process of accommodation has quietly but efficiently dismantled the well-entrenched three-tier distinctions that many of us took utterly for granted, while simultaneously meeting the need to be egalitarian (signified by the verb) as well as distant (signified by the pronoun) in the urban social setting.

Such major shifts in grammatical forms cannot be, and are not, planned within institutions, indeed institutional (con-) texts are often the last to take note of them. They are not monitored by the elite; instead they take place in buses, in markets, in neighbourhood discussions. So here we have one contemporary instance of conversational structure as an invisible but very powerful medium of cultural change.

It is the business of linguists to notice such groundswell shifts when they take place, and to make connections between linguistic patterns, silences and social demands. In India, however, despite a great tradition in language studies, and a populace attuned to bi- and multi-lingualism, we have neglected the role that a formal training in linguistics might have to play in enabling us to 'hear' national dissonances. Economists we trust to provide us with the solutions to India's precarious monetary/budgetary and other problems: historians we rely on to redefine the narratives of our colonial and precolonial past; but those concerned with the linguistic foundation of our epistemologies teach their discipline only to a handful of students in a handful of universities.

Linguistics, for no good reason that I can think of, remains a post-graduate discipline of little moment in our country, a sort of poor relation of literary or sociological studies. This seems decidedly odd in a nation which is allegedly divided into 'linguistic states', where 'link languages' are perennially debated, schools promote a 'three-language formula', and translations between our many languages are the need of the hour.

Yet any plea of this kind, for a particular disciplinary orientation in considering the question of 'India' should not end up as a whine. Rather, theoretical justifications and pragmatic suggestions are in order at this point, provided of course they are as brief as it is possible to make them. In one of the major Indian languages, Malayalam, the word for 'solving a problem' is 'pariharikkuka', which derives from a Sanskrit root which means 'to escape, to avoid, to run away': but not all problems can be resolved simply by running away! Delightful though the escapist route suggested by this Malayalam etymology may be, language is too pervasive a phenomenon to avoid, ostrich-like. Therefore, some basic premises need to be boldly stated.

Theory-wise, the position is simple. It has been assumed that the appeal of linguistic studies in the

'third-world' Indian context must be 'functional'. Linguistic approaches are said to provide the best hope of, say, teaching government officials to write circulars in official Hindi or English rather than in their native languages; of acquiring the 'discourse competence' necessary to handle tricky situations such as job-interviews. However, these 'applications' of linguistics grow out of a more fundamental commitment within the discipline to exploring and questioning language structure—grammatical structure, in the narrowest sense of the phrase, as it is revealed in social interaction, in the widest sense.

Strangely, for a discipline often too mundanely perceived as merely providing 'language technicians', modern linguistics has as its central metaphor a universal one—the figure of the child. It is a shibboleth of all current linguistics that a child acquiring language—any language in the world, for all grammars are equally complex—is the most brilliant of intellectual performers. This foundational belief in the 'wise' child has had a liberating effect on contemporary linguistics, as Freud's tracking back to childhood once had on psychology.

India is one of the few countries in the world which has not yet ratified the UN charter on the rights of children. Even when it does get round to doing so on paper, our children will still be among the most deprived in the world. For this reason, the egalitarian theoretical premise of linguistics that each child, whether she is born on a pavement or in a penthouse, is gifted with verbal genius, is particularly salient in India. Questions specifically about language must be addressed by us as early as primary school, which is when they are most naturally introduced. This is a practical need. It is also possible that such questions could be more rigorously formulated if they were part of an undergraduate spectrum of disciplines on offer, along with psychology, history, Sanskrit, sociology, economics and so on. And I believe a sense of urgency informs these enterprises, not just because our children and our youth are our future, but because so many of them are at present denied any sort of future at all.

The relationships between languages (historical and areal linguistics), between language and cultural norms (sociolinguistics), between language and mind (psycholinguistics, cognition), between language and literature (stylistics), between language and theories of the wor(l)d (philosophy of language), between language and the apparatus of state (language planning, literacy programmes), these form for us a wide catchment area for contemporary discussion. As well as for a call to action. (It is, in my view, no coincidence that the greatest linguist of this century, Noam Chomsky, is also a committed human rights activist and political fighter.)

'Under the cherry tree there are no strangers' says a Zen proverb. To discuss the problem of language in India is to meet under a tree where we may in theory dissolve the differences that we practise.

which is largely non-Sanskrit-speaking and requires them to use other, regional or supra-regional languages. To prevent Sanskrit from suffering the fate of languages like Esperanto, becoming the language of small and largely in-bred groups of 'aficionados' with virtually no practical use, the Sanskrit movement will have to establish an area of social relevance for the use of the language and to find much broader popular support.

One might of course ask whether the endeavour to preserve spoken Sanskrit is even worth the effort. Other languages, such as classical Greek and Latin, have died out in their spoken use and have become 'library languages'. Why should Sanskrit not have the same fate? Ultimately, such questions cannot be answered rationally. But there are important factors that seem to make it worth one's while to attempt maintaining the language in spoken use

To illustrate this point, let us take à brief look at Latin. In medieval and early modern western Europe, Latin held a position as a language of learning, religion, and philosophy very similar to that of Sanskrit in India. By the beginning of the present century, however, its spoken use had effectively died out. And in the second half of the century it was abolished even as the ritual language of the Catholic church (except at the Vatican). Many Catholics still mourn the demise of Latin in the ritual. And several attempts are now under way in Europe to revive Latin as a spoken language. However, because the tradition of spoken Latin has ended, this undertaking is difficult indeed.

If Sanskrit is permitted to wither away as a spoken language, then we must prepare ourselves for the possibility that, like Latin, it will sooner or later die out also in its ritual use. Fortunately, however, it is not too late as yet: there still are fluent speakers in India. If they teach the language as a spoken medium, and if their students learn to speak it, the death of Sanskrit can be prevented. As the Sanskrit expression goes, अत्र विषये भवन्तः अमाणम् : 'In this matter, you (the Indian people) are the authority'.

## Pan-Indian universals

ANVITA ABBI .

THE acquisition of language in early childhood accounts for perhaps the most remarkable intellectual accomplishment in the life of any normal human being. Though only raw and seemingly incomplete data is available to the child for constructing the knowledge of his/her first language, the child undertakes this feat with astonishing rapidity. That is why contemporary linguists, beginning with Noam Chomsky, have tended to reject all socio-cultural conditioning in the explanation of language acquisition and have instead been insisting on an innate Language Acquisition Device (LAD) situated in the human mind.

Locating the language learning mechanism in the human mind, let us say the brain, has additional implications. Like any other organ in the human physiology, the brain is uniform in both structure and function across the human species. Thus the language faculty located largely in the human brain should possess certain universal features in terms of the deeper structure of the sentence, generated in any language, irrespective of the surface differences we normally observe. This is precisely the assumption behind the notion of Universal Grammar put forward by Chomsky and his follo-

Human society has known many ways to communicate among its members; language is one of them, perhaps the most important one. Language is the strongest medium of self-expression and will remain so in the future. This was the motivat-

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It is also true that, as traditionally taught, Sanskrit is a very difficult language. It involves at least the following steps: (i) Learning by heart a rather lengthy traditional grammatical treatise (usually the Siddhantakaumudi); (ii) learning by heart a lengthy traditional thesaurus (usually the Amarakosa); (iii) learning to produce Sanskrit sentences by translation exercises; and (iv) learning proper Sanskrit syntax and usage by extensive reading of classical authors. Each of these steps is extremely time consuming. Moreover, traditional Sanskrit grammars were composed in an exceedingly abstract style, using highly technical terminology, much of which has no application outside grammar (except perhaps to show off one's grammatical erudition). All this is true. However, these difficulties did not just arise in the 1960s, they have been a feature of Sanskrit teaching for centuries.

L he claimed lack of government support is even more dubious. Since independence, the Government of India and most state governments have done much to support Sanskrit. This includes the establishment of a number of Sanskrit universities, academies and other institutions. Sanskrit teachers, previously depending for their living on the small fees which their students could afford to pay and on occasional gifts by private donors, were integrated into the university system, and their pathasalas became colleges. As a consequence, their financial situation improved dramatically. In addition, more high school students learn Sanskrit now than ever before, giving a further boost to the language and occasioning a steady stream of future teachers flocking to the universities and colleges to study Sanskrit.

A much more likely explanation, one with which at least some pandits agree, is the following: One of the very governmental actions designed to support Sanskrit, the integration of Sanskrit teachers and schools into the university system, has indirectly hurt the language. By becoming part of the university structure, Sanskrit teachers have joined a system in which special

effort is perceived as not properly rewarded, in which it is no longer possible to throw out students unwilling to do their work, and in which student unrest and agitation have become a matter of daily routine. If, then, some students protest that Sanskrit is 'too difficult' and claim that the regional language should be used for instruction, some teachers are bound to give in, simply in order to be left in peace.

If, further, such teachers continue to draw the same salary and to receive the same increases as those who, against all odds, try to maintain Sanskrit as the vehicle of instruction, other teachers will cave in to the students' demands and also teach in the regional language. Eventually, the present-day situation is reached, where most teachers are perfectly able to speak Sanskrit and to use it as a medium of instruction, but where, with only a few exceptions, they fail to do so. And it is this failure of the teachers which accounts for the inability of most of their students to speak the language, for, as noted, Sanskrit generally is not a home language, but must be acquired in school.

Whatever the reason, my research suggests that during the last 20-odd years spoken Sanskrit has begun to undergo serious attrition which, if it continues unchecked, will lead to its dying out in the very near future. At the same time, the number of persons still able to speak the language well is probably large enough to reverse this trend—if they make a concerted effort to reinstitute the use of spoken Sanskrit in their teaching. And the government can help in this regard—if it can find a way to encourage this effort. One, potentially highly effective, way in which this could be done would lie in requiring that anyone wanting to become a Sanskrit instructor must pass an examination to establish his or her ability to speak the language fluently.

Recent years have witnessed some new, alternative developments aimed at reversing the trend. But interestingly, these developments are largely taking place outside the established educational system. The developments are coordinated by two

groups, the Hindu-Seva-Pratisthanam (headquartered in Bangalore) and the Loka-Bhasa-Pracara-Samitih (Puri). Both of these were founded by former students of Tirupati Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, which significantly is the only school of its kind—since its founding it has conducted all of its instruction in Sanskrit, whether on traditional subjects or on modern ones (such as pedagogy). Both organizations have founded local groups for the promotion of spoken Sanskrit and hold motivational day- or week-long camps at which interested persons can learn the rudiments of spoken Sanskrit at no cost or for the nominal fee of one rupee a day. During the past several years, thousands of persons of all ages have attended such camps, and several hundred are said to have maintained their interest and to have acquired more than just a rudimentary knowledge of Sans-

Both groups argue that the traditional way of teaching and learning Sanskrit is too cumbersome and time-consuming. Instead, they teach the language employing modern pedagogical methods, as they have been developed for modern languages, with the goal of providing a good grasp of basic grammar and vocabulary within a relatively short period. The teachers of both groups are highly motivated, and the founders and other members of the first generation of teachers have an excellent background in Sanskrit and speak the language impeccably.

What is not so certain is the quality of the Sanskrit of later generations of teachers, many of whom have not gone through the rigorous academic training provided by Tirupati Sanskrit Vidyapeeth. Similarly, while many of the students that I have observed are quite enthusiastic about speaking Sanskrit; their grasp of its grammar often turns out rather elusive. Finally, the question remains whether the initial enthusiasm for learning to speak Sanskrit can be maintained on a long-term basis. Sooner or later, those who have learned Sanskrit will have to face the question of how they can maintain its spoken use outside the relatively small circle of their fellowstudents and teachers, in a society

Clear signs of this use are found? embedded in ritual and philosophical Vedic prose texts, especially in the extensive disputations of the great sage Yajnavalkya. Panini's grammar consistently distinguishes between the formal, ritual language of the Vedas (chandas) and the spoken language of his time (bhasa, from blias—'speak'), and a number of his rules make sense only if taken to refer to a freely spoken language. Further evidence for the spoken use of Sanskrit is found in classical literature, especially in the dialogues of drama. By the beginning of this century, to be sure, Sanskrit no longer was a native language for most speakers but was generally learned in school. However, reports from that time show that Sanskrit still was freely spoken. And as I realized at the 1976 meeting of the American Oriental Society in Philadelphia, Sanskrit remained a spoken medium even into the second half of this century, for I overheard two American Sanskritists in their early forties gossip with each other in Sanskrit Clearly, if Americans could speak Sanskrit for such mundane purposes as gossipping, its spoken use had to be even more widespread in India.

Inspired by such evidence, I set out in 1980/81 to ascertain more fully the status of modern spoken Sanskit. At first sight, there seemed to be good evidence that spoken Sanskrit is in fact alive and well: A large number of households declared Sanskrit their mother tongue in the various censuses of India. A number of universities had been dedicated to Sanskrit, such as the Sanskrit University in Varanasi or the Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth in Tirupati. There were many more Sanskrit colleges—some 80 in Varanasi alone, and even Lucknow. Muslim-oriented and Westernized, could boast of seven in 1980/81. And throughout India, in large cities or small villages, one could meet people who claimed to speak Sanskrit or to know someone who could.

On closer inspection, however, the situation looked less reassuring. The official evaluation of the 1961 census notes that there is nothing in he extent to
Sanskrit as
n actually
y research I
n that persons
cribed to me as speakers, were not
able to use it when I tried to involve them in Sanskrit conversation.
Their oral use of the language
generally was limited to the recitation of short verses (slokas).

ow, I did find many Sanskrit speakers, especially in Varanasi, and some of them were excellent. However, even of these, less then 10% seemed to have been sufficiently exposed to spoken Sanskrit at home that they could have learned it as a quasi-native language. Moreover, even in Varanasi I found only three Sanskrit-speaking families. In one of these, a nuclear family of a father, a mother, and two children, the practice had been started by the father. In another family, the oldest (80+) male member and his son were fluent Sanskrit speakers. Other family members seemed to know and understand some Sanskrit, but during my visits they preferred Hindi. In this family, then, a long tradition of Sanskrit scholarship and speaking seemed to be coming to an end. These facts suggest that the large numbers of households declaring Sanskrit as their mother tongue in the censuses of India either are exaggerating or have a different interpretation of the term 'mother tongue', not as 'native language', but as language 'toward which one feels just as toward his or her own mother'. The major location in which speakers had learned the language was not the home, but the pathasala or the household of a guru, the traditional places of learning. (Westernized colleges and universities figured much less prominently.)

Even more significant, there were quite a number of persons who spoke relatively fluently and freely—and loved to talk in Sanskrit, but who employed a Sanskrit full of grammatical errors or were unable to engage in sustained conversation covering more than just one topic. The number of good speakers, on the other hand, was very small. (By 'good speakers' I mean persons

speaking fluently, grammatically correct, and with grammatical, lexical, and stylistic sophistication.) Moreover, even in Varanasi, a major centre of Sanskrit studies, the number of such good speakers dropped significantly below the age of 50: there were eleven good speakers over 50, but only five under 50. There was thus a significant shortfall of younger persons speaking Sanskrit sufficiently well to teach it to the next generation and thus to continue its spoken tradition. In short, the picture of spoken Sanskrit was by no means as promising as it had appeared at first sight. Rather, Sanskrit appeared to be dying out in its spoken use.

L his conclusion is supported by other evidence. In the 1960s, students at Varanasi Sanskrit University had to speak and understand spoken Sanskrit well enough to attend classes taught in the language. In 1980/81, virtually all instruction took place in Hindi. Likewise, in most pathasalas the medium of instruction was Hindi, not Sanskrit. Only in one instance did I hear Sanskrit used spontaneously. Otherwise I heard it only at special occasions, such as meetings for the promotion and preservation of Sanskrit. And even at such gatherings Hindi was often used beside or instead of Sanskrit.

Several reasons have been suggested for this decline of spoken Sanskrit: Sanskrit is not sufficiently modernized; it is too difficult; it does not receive enough support from the government. None of these reasons, however, can fully explain the situation. True, Sanskrit is in need of modernization, but so are the modern regional languages of India. Modernization, however, is not identical with the development of intellectual or technical terminology. Sanskrit, as the traditional Indian language of scholarship and administration, has at its disposal a veritable treasure house of such terminology which only requires slight modification to be brought up to date. This accounts for the fact that most of the modern languages resort to Sanskrit, not to their own resources, to develop or translate new intellectual and technological terminology.

# Is Sanskrit dying?

HANS HENRICH HOCK

THE idea that Sanskrit is, or ever was, used as a freely spoken vehicle of communication would appear preposterous to most present-day readers. Rather, Sanskrit tends to be viewed as an ancient, venerable and sacred language in which the Vedas have been handed down and which is used in traditional Hindu ritual. It is this view which also prevails in the West. Witness the famous last lines of T. S. Eliot's Wasteland: 'Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata. Shantih shantih shantih'. In addition, of course, Indians know it as a 'library language', the source of much of the new technical vocabulary which, with varying degrees of success and elegance, replaces English words (for instance, doordarshan for 'television') or words of Persio-Arabic origin (as in pustak for kitab).

Linguists additionally know Sanskrit as the language of a formidable indigenous grammatical tradition, going back to about the fifth century BC and even today furnishing many of the grammatical terms used in teaching languages like Hindi (as in kartrvacya for 'active' and karmawacya for 'passive'). Many linguists consider the earliest work in this tradition, Panini's Astadhyayi, the most complete grammatical account ever, of any human language. And Indian phonetics, going back to even earlier, Vedic times, without any doubt revolutionized Western phonetics in the nineteenth century.

Experts in other fields are familiar with many other types of scientific literature composed in Sanskrit, including treatises on poetics and dramaturgy, statecraft, medicine, astronomy/astrology and mathematics. Here again, one type of texts had a major impact on the rest of the world: the mathematical ones which, through Arab transmission, furnished not only the decimal system and the 'Arabic' numerals, but also algebra and trignometry.

All along, however, Sanskrit also flourished as a spoken language.

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ing force for scientists to study the structure of human languages and to identify the common factors shared by them so as to group a number of languages in a typological set, to mark the variations in languages and ultimately, to investigate the sociolinguistic reasons for such variations.

The commonality that all languages share is a consequence of the biological equipment that we all share to make language possible, i.e. the motor system, the perceptual system and the cognitive system upon which linguistic behaviour is overlaid. Although the study of language change has developed along lines quite parallel to biological thinking, it is important to emphaa fundamental difference between the two. In biology, the transmission of genetic material is virtually all vertical, i.e. from parents to offspring. The transmission of linguistic traits is by no means constrained in this way. Our linguistic behaviour is significantly influenced by our peers (horizontal) and by speakers of other generations (oblique). It is the behaviour of the horizontal kind which interests linguists most. No language is pure in its true biological sense and has features of several languages and dialects which coexisted in time and space: see below.

The language of any community is considered to be a reflection of its culture. We therefore do not find it appalling to come across six terms for rice or rice-related activity in Meitei society which is primarily a rice-eating society. In ordinary conversation where cheng means 'rice', phew means 'paddy', chak is used only for boiled rice while chengpak is reserved for 'parched rice', cheng khappa and cheng khayba are the terms used for some

sort of winnowing. The same is true of their favourite dish of fish. Since fish is eaten as part of the staple food, Meiteis distinguish between ngaren 'frozen dish of fish cooked the previous day' and ngarl, which is 'dry fish', or nga 'fish' or ngamu 'mixed fish'. Eskimos have several words for snow and Hindi distinguishes various kinds of bread or rotis such as paratha, poorl, missil, phulka, kachauri, bhenrai, baati, each varying slightly from the other but nonetheless primarily a wheat cake preparation.

Language has been like a viewfinder of the society. Various sociogrammatical aspects of the grammar are closely linked to the cultural make-up of the society. The Oraons in Bihar and Orisaa speak Kurukh or Oraon (more popularly known) which is a Dravidian tribal language. Though the society is male dominated, women play an important role on the economic front and feel exclusively distinct in the society. This is extremely well reflected in their grammatical patterns. Men to men and men to women talk is of one type while women to women talk is exclusively different. For instance, the plural suffix added to any noun in all-male speech or in hetrogeneous speech is different from the plural suffix added to nouns in allfemale speech. The following table provides interesting information for feminists and other 'women's cause' revolutionaries:

Exclusive female speech is not restricted only to plural formations but to several other grammatical processes as well. Women's speech and the rules of its grammar constitute an integral part of learning the grammar of the language. While in front of a man a Kurukh woman says be-edan—'I am sitting', or be-

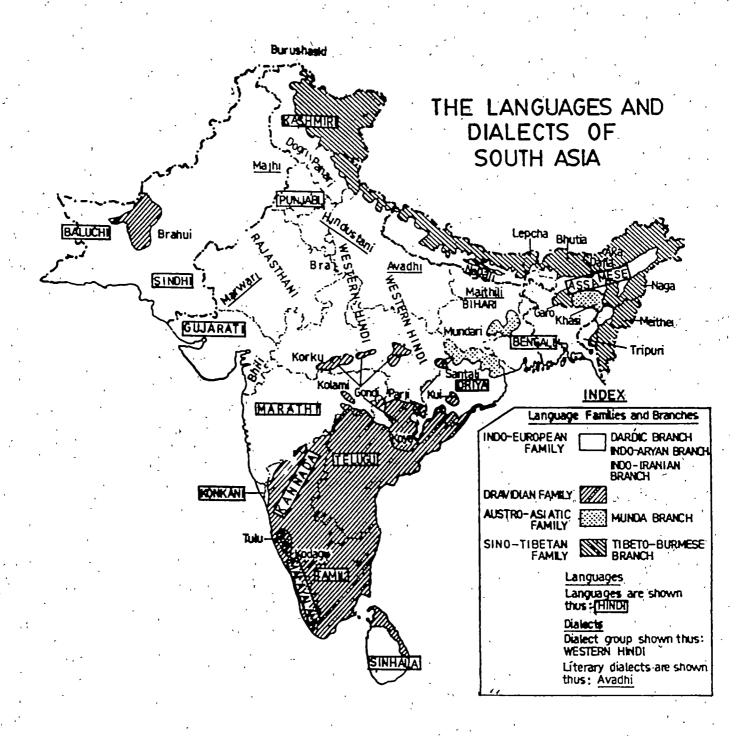
edam—'we are sitting', she switches to be-en—'I am sitting', or be-em—'we are sitting' in all-female company. A single sentence like we will go will have three different grammatical patterns, one in all-male speech, a second in hetrogeneous (male and female) speech and a third in all-female speech.

No language, seen from the communication point of view, is undeveloped or underdeveloped. Various tribals who have yet to see the dawn of our kind of civilization and who live in thick forests, whether in India or in Australia, have perfectly developed languages that satisfy all their communicative needs. Their languages, like ours, also have vowels and consonants and a system to distinguish objects from activities.

It is another matter that these languages might not have different sets of vocabulary items for nouns and verbs as we have in English and in other languages. Many tribal and not so tribal languages of India do not distinguish between the noun class and the verb class by distinct words and the same lexical item may perform the function of both. This is certainly very true of Kharia (Munda language), and many Tibeto-Burman languages such as Meitei and Mizo. In Mizo lou is both 'jhum field' and 'to pluck', par means both 'flower' as well as 'blooming' or 'to bloom'.

L he question is, should complexity of structure or economicity be judged as the criterion of development? We have no sure answer as the communicative network, the way it operates via language in any cultural group, is rather complex. Many Indian languages do not make a distinction between past and present tense, though there is never a confusion among speakers as the context provides the clue. Mizo makes a distinction between future and non-future verb forms, with the latter indicating both the present and past tenses. According to many ethno-linguists, dividing the verb forms into two basic categories reflects the attitude and the philosophical beliefs of the community. Attitudinal behaviour and social beliefs are reflected in the kinship terms also. Kurukh and a few of the Munda

| Singular | Plural (general) | Plural (all-female speech) |                       |
|----------|------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| babas    | babaagar         | babaabagay                 | 'fath <del>er</del> ' |
| betas    | betaabagar       | betaabagay .               | 'son'                 |
| mundas   | mundar .         | munday                     | 'boy'                 |
| angrejas | angrejas         | angrejay                   | 'foreigners'          |
| dadas    | dadaabagar       | dadaabagay                 | 'elder brother'       |



languages do not have isolated terms for brother and sister but do have terms for 'my brother', 'your sister' etcetera, marking close-knitted societies where associations and possessions are given importance.

Associations and possessions are important in our kind of societies too, no matter how much we talk of impartial and egalitarian social norms. Robin Lakoff, a noted linguist, has often talked about *linguistic sexual inequality* which has infested the English language speakers' world. She claims that women in our kind of society, be it in India or in the USA, are given their identities by virtue of their relationship with the men, not vice-versa. This is amply evident in how we use the language.

Linguistic behaviour serves as a diagnosis of our hidden feelings and of our socio-cultural attitudes towards each other. Perhaps very few of us realize that women experience linguistic discrimination in two ways: in the way they are taught to use language, and in the way general language use treats them. Both tend to relegate women to certain subservient functions: that of sex object or servant.

The rigid and impenetrable Indian caste system and caste hierarchy are reflected in many caste dialects of India. Tamil and Kannada Brahmin dialects are easily identified and distinguished from their respective non-Brahmin dialects. This is another important instance of language inequality, which corresponds to the non-egalitarian and hierarchical social structure of the country.

Socially, for all normal human beings, language is the medium for various kinds of communication. Information about the physical or social world, which is psychologically processed, may be communicated among the individuals of a language community. What various theoretical linguists, including Noam Chomsky, had been claiming recently is the fact that despite all the apparent diversity available on the surface, language does have a general structure, whose grammar would be the universal grammar. The fea-

tures of such a grammar could be located at the phonological, syntactic and semantic levels of language.

Historically, scholars have attempted to establish, with some accuracy, the relationship among languages. In the nineteenth century such an attempt culminated in comparative methods which tried to determine the genealogical relationship between different languages. It was during this period that the idea of language families originated. The underlying assumption was that languages perhaps had a common origin, and had later split into different languages (just like members of a family establishing their lineage). Many such language families were posited: Indo-European, Dravidian, Sino-Tibetan and so on.

L he study of language history and the relationships among languages is one of the tasks of comparative linguistics. It would not be far from the truth if I say that very few of the world's languages are unrelated to other spoken languages and most can be grouped into families. But in the urge for finding the 'parent' language, we are limited by two factors: one, languages always change, no matter how slow the process; and second, the written records that could be available to serve as the basis of comparison across languages date back only approximately 6,000 years. How language changes can be seen by the following example of Old and Modern English:

Old English: In pam tune waeron paet hus and paet bur paes corles.

Modern English: In the town were the house and chamber of the chief.

The latter is the translation of the former. Language change can take place at the phonological, lexical, syntactic and semantic as well as pragmatic levels. It is this characteristic of language which at times puzzles and intrigues linguists as it is quite possible for a language to change so much that it ceases to resemble its sister languages (other genealogically related languages) and instead resembles the geographically proximate language/s.

If Dakhini Urdu/Hindi has a grammatical structure like that of Telugu and if Kurukh bears a grammatical similarity to Hindi, it is not genetic affiliation or chance that is responsible for such resemblance but the mutual contact between the speakers of the two languages. We call such resemblances areal resemblances. Areal features are the result of long contact between various genetically unrelated languages spoken in one contiguous area.

India can boast of at least four major language families of the world, i.e. Dravidian, Indo-European, Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman (see map). The languages of these four distinct families had been spoken in the continent of South Asia, not in isolated pockets segregated from each other but as links in a chain interconnected with each other by mutual intelligibility. We are well aware that mutual intelligibility is a gradient matter that does not partition well. The community in the middle of a chain typically shares more intelligibility with its neighbours on either side than these neighbours share with each other. The extreme ends of the chain may not be mutually intelligible at all, but they bear some resemblance to other links in the middle of the chain. These linguistic resemblances among genetically distinct languages spoken in a contiquous area are areal universals. The area in which linguistic universals prevail is known as linguistic area.

India is and always has been a multilingual and multiethnic community characterized by a long history of mutual contacts and conflicts. Monolingualism is as much an idealization as the division of the country into various linguistic states. Constant multilinguality in a country often generates a convergence of linguistic features of various genetically unrelated and typologically distinct languages spoken in an area. Multilinguality and multiethnicity in India has given rise to several converged linguistic features which identify it as a prominent linguistic area.

The emergence of areal features is an indicator of shared semantic,

ethnic, and cognitive constructs among the people of an area. An area marked by a bundle of such areal features should be seen as a cultural area. At present, Indian languages, regardless of their genealogical affinity, share many features which mark them as being Indian, as distinct from non-Indian languages. The effect of convergence is so strong that the Indo-Aryan languages of India share very little with their sister languages of Indo-European spoken outside the South Asian subcontinent. They share more with Dravidian and Munda languages than with languages of Indo-European stock spoken elsewhere.

Some of the common features shared by all Indian languages are retroflex sounds produced by curling the tongue against the prepalatal region and flapping it back on the floor of the mouth. For example /t/ in Hindi/ata/ 'flour'. Barring Assamese, all Indian languages have these types of sounds (the series is long): (t th d dh r rh n). It is not surprising then that when an Indian speaks English, he pronounces the initial sound of 'tea' and 'tie' with an Indian/t/. Secondly, almost all Indian languages are verb final languages, i.e. the verb occupies the last position in a sentence unlike English. For instance, in Hindi vo kela khata hai — 'he eats a banana'. Thirdly, we make ample use of compound verbs (a combination of two or more than two verbs) to indicate various aspectual and attitudinal elements. Hindi a 'come' + ja 'go' put together means 'come in' and not 'go away'. These compounds could be as long as to contain five (in Malayalam) verbs. Another common linguistic trait is two-to-three degrees of 'you' such as Tamil ni-ningal or Hindi tu, tum and ap.

Echo formation such as Hindi caay-vaay 'tea', 'kaam vaam' 'work and such things' etcetera, Panjabi roti-shoti 'meal', where the second unit of the compound does not have the potentiality to occur on its own yet provides the semantic extension of the word it collocates with. These types of structures are very common in Indian languages. Another interesting feature shared by all Indian

languages is marking of the subject of the psychological experience verbs in the dative or any other oblique case. For instance, verbs which denote 'hunger', 'thirst' 'anger', 'love', 'hate', 'fever', 'cold', 'cough' and so on, have the subject (experiencer) noun in the datives (with oblique case marking)—a feature not shared by other non-Indian languages and English.

Thus English has (a) I go to the temple in the morning, and (b) I am hungry but in Hindi 'I' in (a) and (b) types of constructions would be differently marked. Many other Indian languages also share this trait. Thus in Hindi (a) main subah mandir jaatii huun but (b) mujhe bhookh lagii hai. The list is long and we certainly cannot discuss all types of common linguistic features here. However, the most important one is the reduplication of words.

Reduplication can be either of a syllable such as Khasi lau? lau? 'clouds' Kharia ra? ra? flower, Sora didi 'to count' or of the constituents becomes of a word, i.e. Santhali dal becomes da-dal or of the whole word such as Hindi galii galii 'lanes' or Marathi basun basun 'sitting'. Whatever may be the unit of reduplication, the end result is a new word which has no parallel in its non-reduplicated counterpart. Languages of Austro-Asiatic stock such as Kharia, Santhali, Munda and Khasi build their lexicon by reduplicating words, 'to die' for instance, Kharia: goej' (v) but goej 'goej' 'dead like' (adj): sori 'with' and sori sori 'together' bor 'beg' and bor bor lebu 'beggar' etcetera; or Khasi re 'blind', re re 'blindly' or sano 'where' but sano sano, 'anywhere' etc. Reduplication is a very productive process in these languages to coin new words.

It is interesting to observe that almost all the languages of India reduplicate all parts of speech to convey various meanings. The kernel semanteme of reduplication is intensification. A recent study on 33 spoken languages of India was conducted by the author to investigate into the use of reduplication. Over 20 syntactico-semantic features were identified which are manifested in the reduplicated form of words. Among these 20-odd features, langu-

ages of north and central India had the highest presence of reduplicated structures.

Our investigation into various Indian languages confirmed that reduplication of words is the most common feature shared by all language families and can be considered pan-Indian without any boundaries being specified. The following examples attest our claim: 'He got tired of sitting (for a long period of time)'.

Hindi vo balthe balthe thak gayaa

Assamese teu bahi bahi bha: gori gol.:

Bangla she boshe boshe ha: pie u: the che

Dogari o bei bei ge u:tt geya: Gujarati te baithe baithe thaki

Jujarati te baithe baithe thaki gelo

Konkani to: baeson baeson thaka:n gelo
Kashmiri su thok b'th b'th

Marathi te basun basun thakle
Maithili o baisal baisal thaik
gel

Oriya se khali *basibasi* thaki .

galani
Panjabi o baithe balthe thak

Sindhi geyaa ho wahande wahande

thakji pyo

Sadari u: baethe
baethe thaik gelak
Kabui kamai la?na dungdunge

Meitei mahak fam-na fam-na cok th-ram-y

Paite ama tutulat apukta Birjia huni duru duru thaka: yena

Kharia hokkar doko doko thakke gotki
Mundari enhore dubdub lagain

Kannada avanu kutu kutu

Kodagu susta:da ava arltta arltta cotapoci

Malayalam carkan irinatta
irinatta vesemiccu
Kurukh a: 8 bongte bongte

Kurukh a: s bongte bongte
xar diyas keras
Tamil utkarandt utkarandt

Tamil *utkarandt utkarandt* avanakku aluttu

vittada

Telugu atanu kuroconi kuroconi a: lasi po

va: du

Various historical and archaeological studies indicate that the speakers

of Aryan, Dravidian, Austric and Tibeto-Burman groups were interacting with each other around 1500 BC. The intermingling of Aryans with Dravidians, and of Dravidians with Austrics and Tibeto-Burman speakers, generated a civilization which was neither totally Aryan nor totally Dravidian. It was a composite structure with pan-Indian features which embodied cultural traits from all groups. The linguistic situation was more or less the same. In addition to the simple lexical borrowings, the convergence of other grammatical features of one language family with those of another language family emerged. Through contact, conflict, and compromise, which remained for a large number of centuries, a racial, linguistic and cultural fusion of these people began.

onstant contact between different cultures often generates conflicts between various linguistic patterns. These conflicts do not last very long. Ethnocultural and emotional needs lead to compromise in the linguistic pattern, which is then shared by all. It is in this situation that an areal universal emerges. Indian areal features are the result of such fusion and compromises. Cases of such linguistic convergences are also found in the Balkans, in areas of Eastern Europe, in parts of North America and in Mexico-America. India is a part of the South Asian linguistic area.

Language change can thus take place due to any or all of the following reasons: (i) social variables such as caste, class, or any other hierarchical set-up used by any speech community to create group solidarity; (11) various sociolinguistic factors which determine interpersonal and intra-community relationships (hence various different 'codes' employed by an individual speaker); (iii) stable bi/multilingualism situation leading to racial, social and linguistic convergences; and (1v) change in speech habits of the speakers of a language over a long period of time.

Overt and pre-planned efforts of a handful of powerful (in administration and in the intellectual world) people towards modernization and standardization of languages lead to yet another type of important and drastic change. This kind of a change is a fairly new phenomenon, and is not widely accepted by all those who speak the language. Nonetheless, it does change the language, sometimes to the extent of rendering it unrecognizable. Standard Hindi or standard Urdu used by All India Radio are different and distant from their respective spoken versions to the extent that much of the message is beyond comprehension of a normal, native speaker.

while the first four factors leading to language change are either because the speech communities are very close or they want to be close, the last, i.e. the developmental factor creates distances among the people, as the hearer (or the reader) fails to identify himself with the speaker (or the writer).

We must, at this point, distinguish between bilingualism existing in a composite culture and bilingualism existing in an alien culture. In a composite culture knowledge of more than two languages is a help and a means to close the communication gap, whereas bilingualism in an alien culture often creates confusion and a communication gap.

If linguistic imbalances bring into focus real world inequities and imbalances, then linguists should be asked to suggest where improvements are possible or point out where improvements have already been made. However, the important fact to remember is that a social or a cultural change will definitely bring in a change in language but not the reverse. A change in language will bring about no change in the cultural or social structure of the speech community. However, a marginal change in the social structure might be envisaged due to the use of standardized or modernized language (language change because of the developmental factors), in the form of further creating hierarchical groupings of those who use the modernized language and those who do not, and thus obliviating the shared, converged and 'areal' features which are symbols representing people in close and harmonious contact.

## Language policy models

W. W. BOSTOCK and S. V. RAO

THIS article seeks to consider the philosophical problems over language policy confronting developing nations (though essentially similar problems confront developed nations as well). After examining the views or models advocated by several experts and after evaluating their assumptions, as well as those of some actual policy-makers and subjects, we attempt to put forward another model which seeks to maximize the desired values and minimize the undesired ones.

Model 1: The Language of Wider Communication (LWC).

It has been noted that there are about 3,000 identifiable speech communities (language groups) in the world today, with about 1,000 of them in Africa. The picture in the developing world is exceedingly complex: some 5,000 language names have been recognized in sub-Saharan Africa, and though they do not refer to separate languages, this fact does reflect the complexity and heterogeneity of the situation which has been marked by innumerable movements of population, conquests, peaceful interactions and cultural, religious and commercial movements over many centuries, but culminating for the last century in the imposition of a small number of European languages.

The view has been taken that linguistic complexity is a barrier to development; in the words of Spencer, '... the more complex and interactive a socio-economic organism becomes, the greater the handicap of linguistic complexity' (1985: 389). Economic development has been equated with linguistic homogenization, and even though many developed nations may have minority languages, none of them has to function in a language which is external and the mother-tongue of virtually

none of its population (Spencer, 1985: 390).

This is not to say that all languages are not equal: all natural languages have highly complex grammatical and semantic structures; however, the extrinsic factors are by no means equal. Many of the languages of the developing world have not been graphized, while some have competing orthographic systems. Competition with the LWC's English and French is not a competition between equals, and the point has been made that any attempts at linguistic self-sufficiency through sole use of the vernacular would result in a linguistic and cultural ghetto, which was the aim, for example, of the South African Bantu Education Act which increased the use of the vernacular and reduced access to the two national languages of English and Afrikaans so that linguistic and ethnic divisions could be intensified through reduced communication possibilities (Spencer, 1985: 392).

Few scholars would advocate a policy of linguicide, the complete destruction of a vernacular, though many governments have done so and some are still heavily engaged in the practice today. Therefore a policy of bilingualism or multilingualism seems inevitable, though as Spencer points out, it is never easy and always expensive (Spencer, 1985: 393). The point has also been made that where the colonial language has not been English or French, but another language, such as Dutch in Indonesia, this has provided less of a barrier against the introduction of a national language, in this case Bahasa Indonesia (Spencer, 1985: 392). With Indonesia, it has also been pointed out that until the middle of the last century, the local population in the then Dutch East Indies were forbidden by law even to learn Dutch (Wurm, 1985: 381).

The LWC model thus stresses the importance of communication in a development context and is often associated with the needs of technological transfer from the wider cultures to the more specific ones. But there is also the question of identity: languages embody identity but the view has been taken that identity can survive, even flourish, in a language other than its original vernacular. In his study of the decline of Irish Gaelic, Edwards was able to conclude that, 'The Irish as a group seem not to have lost their national identity, but to have enshrined it in English' (1985: 62).

Where a language has declined it may take on a function that is more symbolic than communicative, and Edwards asserts that Irish is in this position. His study of the Irish as what he considers to be a successful example of 'identity without language' model leads Edwards to take a laissex-faire view of language planning and policy, that is to say, language is best left to its own devices in the struggle for survival. Thus, language maintenance and revival efforts are usually artificial—in the sense that they are removed from a realistic overall appreciation of social dynamics—and doomed to failure' (1985: 169). While neither the LWC predominance view or the 'identity without language' model are opposed to vernaculars, they are not in favour of the strong promotion of vernaculara.

### Model 2: Language Nationalism

It has been pointed out that in an ex-colonial situation, colonial languages have created a lasting chasm between elite and masses, stunted the cognitive growth and creativity of people, distorted the relationship between technology and society by promoting inappropriate technologies, and leaving as a residue a small Westernized elite dedicated to an alien life-style (Pattanayak, 1986: 5). Today the developing world has 75% of the world's population and 14% of the world's income, a situation attributable not only to resource capitalism but also knowledge capitalism. The post-World War II

period has seen not only an increasing gap between developed and developing countries but between elite and masses within the developing countries (Pattanayak, 1986: 399). The colonial languages play an important part in devaluing local cultures and technologies and building an elite at the expense of a nation so that trained people are sometimes a major export. An UNCTAD study in 1971 estimated that the developing countries exported about 30 billion US dollars in trained manpower to the US alone (Pattanayak, 1986: 8). It has been stated that 'Replacement of the mother tongues by another language which is the ally of an empire deprives many people of their subsistence and makes a few privileged' (Pattanayak, 1986: 5).

It has sometimes been argued that pupils in vernacular schools achieve less results than those in LWC-medium schools. But studies in India showed that the significant factors in producing educational outcomes were the socio-economic status of the children and the methods, materials and facilities of the school; and that these were invariably lower in the vernacular-medium schools (Pattanayak, 1986: 11).

According to D P Pattanayak, the Director of the Central Institute of Indian Languages, education in the vernacular is the appropriate language education policy for developing nations because it enables the nation to function optimally, in that:

- (i) equal opportunity to participate in national reconstruction is afforded to a large majority of the population;
- (it) access to education and therefore to personal development is granted to a greater number of persons:
- (ttt) knowledge is democratized in that it is no longer the exclusive domain of an elite, thus enabling technology to be democratized and more fully developed:
- (iv) information is decentralized ensuring a free as opposed to centralized and controlled media;
- (v) the opportunity for political awareness and involvement for individuals, groups and sectors is greatly

increased, thereby enhancing the prospects for stable democracy.

Apart from these educational, technological, political and social benefits of a vernacular-use language policy in the context of developing nations, there is also the human rights factor such that use of the vernacular will lead to the fullest prospects for the balanced development of human personality.

Writing of his own country but with relevance to all other developing countries, Pattanayak stated: The Indian predicament is symptomatic of the predicament of the multilingual, multicultural and multiethnic developing world. The ethos of multilingualism is diametrically opposite to that of dominant monolingualism. For the latter, many languages are an absurdity whereas for the former they are a necessary condition of existence' (1986: 402).

The claim that the vernacular should have priority over the LWC is also taken up by Phillipson, Skutnabb-Kangas and Africa (1986) in the context of Namibia. While noting that swapo (South West Africa People's Organization) has optedfor English as an official language for independent Namibia, they ask the question: will English secure liberation or will it simply serve as a. vehicle for neo-colonialism? At present Afrikaans serves as the lingua franca of Namibia, with 15% of the population of 1.5 million having it as their mother tongue, with 1% having English as their mother tongue, and seven major local languages covering the rest of the population, the largest of them being Oshiwambo with approximately 45% of Namibians (Phillipson, et. al., 1986: 78). While Afrikaans is seen as a language of oppression, English is seen as a language of liberation. This, Phillipson, Skutnabb-Kangas and Africa find inadvisable as English is the language. of world capitalism: 'English is the key link between world capitalism and the local elites via the economic, military and cultural interests that unite them' (1986:90).

Moreover, English will produce an elite filled by a personality type identified as the Afrosaxon (Phillipson et. al., 1986: 78). Thus the authenticity-needs of a culture are not served by operation in a LWC.

Model 3: Specific Languages for Specific Purposes

If it is assumed that the political decision-maker, when dealing with language questions, will wish to maximize the following values: technological and administrative modernization, public health and welfare, economic development, mass education, peace, and mass participation in the pursuit of national objectives, while minimizing the following disvalues: exploitation from outside, exploitation by local elites, poverty, misery and disease including psychosocial disease such as anomie and loss of identity, conflict (external and internal), will Models 1 or 2 serve these objectives?

Model 1 (LWC) does offer instant communication possibilities with the world outside. Countries that have tried to 'go it alone' have found the costs of developing indigenous technology too great, for the reason that sharing technology greatly reduces the burden by collaboration with other cultures. Levi-Strauss has likened this process to that of a gambler who placed his bets on a long series and who would almost certainly be ruined, as compared with a coalition of gamblers betting on the same series at different tables and who, by pooling their numbers, greatly increased their chances of winning (1975: 125-126).

This is not to say that individual cultures cannot produce singular masterpieces of creativity, which they often do, but simply that collaboration can greatly enhance favourable outcome. Spencer is right to point to the enormous benefits to a developing nation in the access which an LWC brings to technology, administration, science and concepts. But does an LWC automatically bring a culture in its train? Phillipson et. al. argue that a culture of wider communication (CWC) must necessarily be imported with the LWC, noting for example that ...even teaching materials written in independent African countries perpetuate colonial or Western values' (1986: 85).

Moreover, they argue that it is in the interests of the CWCs to promote the LWCs. 'References to the supposed superiority of a European language, or its use in international relations, or its neutrality vis-a-vis competing local languages are one-sided and misleading. The arguments, and the underlying attitudes, are comparable to those used in imperialist anthropology, history and literature, and follow the same logic as racism' (1986: 91-92).

They go on to conclude that it is paradoxical that SWAPO should consider English as a 'language of liberation'. But in this matter swapo may have a better grasp of strategy than Phillipson, Skuttnab-Kangas and Africa. Cultures carry an ideological content but languages are in fact neutral, which is to say that one and the same language can carry diametrically opposed ideologies equally well, be it revolutionary or reactionary. If this were not so, all nations using the same language would necessarily profess the same ideology-which is clearly not the

or example, leaders of the German Federal Republic and leaders of the German Democratic Republic can each use German equally well to express their contrasting ideological aims (Clyne, 1984). Similarly for technology, all nations using the same language should be at the same level of technology advancement and employ identical techniques, which is obviously not the case. The vernacular may be free of Western ideological content, but it may also provide no exit from a 'linguistic and cultural ghetto', to use Spencer's term.

Pattanayak wisely points to the need for technology, education and political participation to be broadly based, and notes that a nation can be multilingual in its pursuit of this policy aim of broad-based participation, but observes at the same time that Hindi failed to achieve its planned role as the national language of India. The number of highly developed technological cultures that are multilingual (Switzerland, Sweden, Belgium, Canada, etcetera) disproves the monolingualism - as - necessarycondition - of - technology argument, while Japan and increasingly China show that a culture can develop technical sophistication in its own vernacular.

But development in the context of a large number of vernaculars, such as in India with its dominant languages and a much larger number of other languages, is hard to envisage because of the isolation factor or lack of resource pooling as in Levi-Strauss's model of cultural collaboration. Pattanayak argues for a policy of linguistic diversity: 'Asia, Africa and Latin America, which are multilingual, multicultural and multiethnic, are under pressure to apply monomodels, which are sources of tension and inequity' (1985:399).

The consequences of the cultural degradation and destruction which automatically follow the downgrading of a vernacular are acute, whether it be by an LWC or a politically more important national language. In this context Hangen has written that '...the imposition of a new language merely because it has some national or international advantage, is disruptive of the life pattern. It leaves people uprooted, lonely, aggressive, unsocial' (1985: 14).

Hangen's recommendation for an ideal language policy is one of bilingualism: 'The solution would rather seem to be a thoughtfully planned bilingualism which leaves each of us with a native, homely, familiar everyday language in which we can live and love. Then we can learn a language of wider communication that will enable us to travel to the ends of the world if occasion arises' (1985: 14). In this instance, Hangen would probably be prepared to accept multilingualism in a small number of languages equally as well as bilingualism, and the model could be described as one of 'specific languages for specific purposes'.

If it is accepted that an LWC is necessary for communicative purposes and that genuine creativity is most favoured by conditions of personal, individual and group security, a model could be proposed as follows (see box).

Thus the information and concepts from outside that are necessary as raw materials for the creative

process within a system can be introduced in an LWC; creativity can take place in a vernacular, while the results in the form of concepts, techniques and products can then be exported to the outside world through an LWC. One of the most highly acclaimed writers in French today, Tahar ben Jalloun, has stated in relation to 'being maghrebian': 'If I had written in Arabic... I would have waited until the year 2,000 to be translated into French, to be read and discussed' (Jalloun, 1982). In other words, the experience of 'being mahgrebian' must be expressed in French to be known by the outside world. Without a reference point, 'being mahgrebian' remains meaningless.

| Purpose:  | Commu-<br>nication | Creativity |
|-----------|--------------------|------------|
| Language: | LWC                | Vernacular |

Not only is creativity important for reasons of cultural, social and political well-being, but also, in a world increasingly controlled by giant transnational corporations, for reasons of economic production of original products which will capture export markets, whether in primary, manufacturing or tertiary areas of economic activity.

If exploitation is taking place, it is the fault of the exploiting power and not the language used, or to put it another way, a particular language is not a necessary condition for exploitation, though a language can be instrumental in facilitating exploitation, and also conversely in facilitating liberation. The contrasting attitudes of English and French colonizers reflect their respective philosophies of colonization rather than any qualities inherent in either of these two LWCs (Lewis, 1961-62).

What are the attitudes of the subjects themselves? As already noted, swape has declared itself in favour of English as an official language of Namibia (Phillipson et.al. 1986: 78), while the schoolchildren of Soweto have courageously demonstrated their preference for English over

Afrikaans in 1976 (Keesings 1976: 27, 886). Weinstein (1980: 70) reported that in May 1979, Black lycee students in Nouakchott went on strike when the Mauritanian government upgraded the status of Arabic vis a vis French and also Wolof and Pulaar, while non-Merina peoples in Madagascar reacted violently against the Merina variety of Malagasy and demanded the maintenance of French. Sometimes there have been demonstrations against the LWCs: Weinstein (1976: 295) reported that the Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM) has demanded the replacement of French and English in Mauritius with Creole or Kreol.

In evidence of acceptance of the need for development co-operation through the medium of the LWCs-English or French—one could cite. membership in the Commonwealth and/or la Francophonie, as agreed to by the majority of former British or French colonies. Both organizations guarantee respect for the indigenous languages of their member states; the Commonwealth has granted official language status to the 40 national languages of its members (Commonwealth of Nations 1984). In the case of la Francophonie, all but three (Algeria, Madagascar, Switzerland) of the world's states where French has official status are members of the organizing body, the Agency of Cultural and Technical Co-operation (Bostock 1986: 254). In addition, it is significant that the impetus towards the foundation of la Francophonie came not from the French themselves but from the African leaders-Senghor of Senegal, Bourguiba of Tunisia and Diori of Niger.

In the light of these philosophic considerations and the demonstrated preferences of the people affected by the decisions on these questions, the appropriate policy would therefore be one of judicious balance between the communicative functions, as best performed by the LWC, and the creativity-producing and identity-storing functions of the vernacular, i.e. specific languages for specific purposes. The concept behind this model cannot be better expressed than by the late Sekou Toure of Guinea when he stated that Africans have no objection to

partnership as such but it should not be the partnership of the rider and the horse (Lewis 1961-62: 15).

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# An experiment in literacy

M. P. PARAMESWARAN

ADULT education programmes have been with us for a long time from the night schools of pre-independence days to the National Literacy Mission of today. But the number of illiterates in our country has continued to increase. Though the Constitution directed that the state shall endeavour to provide to everybody free and compulsory education upto 14 years of age within 10 years, this has not materialized even today. A substantial percentage of the children born after independence grew up into illiterate adults. There is still no guarantee that all the children born today will become literate.

Though we can list a number of reasons for this state of affairs, they tend to become cyclical and close into a vicious circle of poverty, illiteracy of parents, lack of motivation and so on, each related to the other as cause and effect. We need to break this vicious circle and at the same time prevent it from reclosing. The efforts of the National Literacy Mission were directed towards this. And while even today, cynicism has the upper hand, one can see a faint silver line on the dark horizon. Here we give a short account of some of the experiments that have contributed towards the formation of this silver line.

The district of Ernakulam in the state of Kerala became fully literate

and was declared so on 4 February 1990 by V P Singh, the then prime minister of India. On the same day he inaugurated a campaign to make the entire state fully literate, by handing over a torch of literacy to the then chief minister E K Nayanar: Kerala was declared fully literate on 18 April 1991. These events by themselves do not have much significance for the rest of India-Kerala was already a highly literate state. But the methodology adopted in Kerala is relevant to the rest of India. The union territory of Pondicherry followed Kerala and became fully literate. District after district in a number of states - South Kanara and Bijapur in Karnataka, Midnapur and Burdvan in West Bengalare in the process of becoming fully literate.

Total literacy programmes are running in about 50 districts of India covering about 20-25 million illiterates. Every month three or four new districts are taking up total literacy campaigns. Apparently, a chain reaction has been set in motion. The importance of the Kerala experiment lies in the setting in motion of this chain reaction. Though the conditions prevailing in these districts and Kerala differ widely, certain methodological elements developed for Kerala have proved useful for them as well. They are:

\*The massive approach: one district or at least one block taken up in one go.

\*Saturation environment building: no member of the society, literate or illiterate, be allowed to escape from the impact of this environment building campaign.

\*Transformation of literacy work from 'employment opportunity' to 'patriotic duty'.

\*Meticulous spatial and temporal planning as in a war for the deployment of human and material resources.

\*Integration of people's enthusiasm with administrative machinery on the one hand and professional project implementation machinery on the other.

\*Delinking the implementation machinery from governmental bureaucracy to increase dynamism and flexibility and at the same time ensuring accountability through stringent monitoring by project machinery and the public.

The Ernakulam total literacy project was entrusted to the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) by the National Literacy Mission. It was implemented by a specially constituted District Literacy Society with the district collector as chairperson. This organizational form a district literacy society with a district collector at the helm-is the common feature of most of the total literacy campaigns that have been taken up. The Kerala Total Literacy Programme was conceived and initiated by the KSSP and implemented by the Kerala Saksharatha Samithi constituted exclusively for this purpose with the chief minister as its chairperson.

Although there had been marginal and submarginal attempts in imparting literacy to the 'less fortunate' citizens even during the days of the freedom struggle, there has never been a concerted effort to 'eradicate illiteracy'. The Kothari Commission Report pointed this out in very strong words:

To put an end to this intolerable situation we recommend a na-

tionwide coherent and sustained campaign for liquidation of illiteracy. The campaign should be inspired by a faith in its vital significance to national life and should be organized and supported vigorously by the social and political leadership of the country. It should involve the central, state and local governments, all governmental agencies, all voluntary agencies, and private organizations and institutions, all educational institutions ranging from universities to primary schools and, above all, the educated men and women in the country. A lesser effort will fail to generate the necessary motivation and build up of effective momentum....The essence of the mass approach lies in a determined mobilization of all available educated men and women in the country to constitute a force to combat illiteracy. Whereas the selective approach is tied down by its inherent limitations and is by its very nature ineffective as an overall solution, the mass approach can achieve a real breakthrough.

t was only in late 1970s, during the first Janata regime, that a concerted attempt was put into in the form of National Adult Education Programme to free the nation from illiteracy. This attempt did not succeed. But the idea persisted and reappeared after a decade in the form of the National Literacy Mission. Since in both the Ernakulam programme and the total Kerala programme KSSP played a cardinal role, we shall follow the genesis of the project through them.

From its very inception, KSSP has had a sustained interest in the field of education. A large number of its members came from the teaching community. It formulated many of its early activities with the objective of improving school science education. Popularization of science and creation of a scientific world outlook were the purposes for which KSSP was formed. It has been aware of the relationship between lack of scientific awareness among the majority of the people and their poverty, the relationship between

Literacy-1991

| Rank State/Union Territory         Literacy           India         52.11           1. Kerala         -90.59           2. Mizoram         81.23           3. Lakshadweep         79.23           4. Chandigarh         78.73           5. Goa         76.96           6. Delhi         76.09           7. Pondicherry         74.91           8. Andaman & Nicobar Islands         73.74           9. Daman & Diu         73.58           10. Tamil Nadu         63.72           11. Himachal Pradesh         63.54           12. Maharashtra         63.05           13. Nagaland         61.30           14. Manipur         60.96           15. Gujarat         60.91           16. Tripura         60.39           17. West Bengal         57.72           18. Punjab         57.14           19. Sikkim         56.53           20. Karnataka         55.98           21. Haryana         55.33           22. Assam         53.42           23. Orissa         48.55           24. Meghalaya         48.26           25. Andhra Pradesh         45.11           26. Madhya Pradesh  |                                    |               |
|--|------------------------------------|---------------|
| India         52.11           1. Kerala         -90.59           2. Mizoram         81.23           3. Lakshadweep         79.23           4. Chandigarh         78.73           5. Goa         76.96           6. Delhi         76.09           7. Pondicherry         74.91           8. Andaman & Nicobar Islands         73.74           9. Daman & Diu         73.58           10. Tamil Nadu         63.72           11. Himachal Pradesh         63.54           12. Mabarashtra         63.05           13. Nagaland         61.30           14. Manipur         60.96           15. Gujarat         60.91           16. Tripura         60.39           17. West Bengal         57.72           18. Punjab         57.14           19. Sikkim         56.53           20. Karnataka         55.98           21. Haryana         55.33           22. Assam         53.42           23. Orissa         48.55           24. Meghalaya         48.26           25. Andhra Pradesh         45.11           26. Madhya Pradesh         41.71           27. Uttar Pradesh         41.71  |                                    | Literacy      |
| 1. Kerala       -90.59         2. Mizoram       81.23         3. Lakshadweep       79.23         4. Chandigarh       78.73         5. Goa       76.96         6. Delhi       76.09         7. Pondicherry       74.91         8. Andaman & Nicobar Islands       73.74         9. Daman & Diu       73.58         10. Tamil Nadu       63.72         11. Himachal Pradesh       63.54         12. Maharashtra       63.05         13. Nagaland       61.30         14. Manipur       60.96         15. Gujarat       60.91         16. Tripura       60.39         17. West Bengal       57.72         18. Punjab       57.14         19. Sikkim       56.53         20. Karnataka       55.98         21 Haryana       55.33         22. Assam       53.42         23. Orissa       48.55         24. Meghalaya       48.26         25. Andhra Pradesh       45.11         26. Madhya Pradesh       41.71         27. Uttar Pradesh       41.71         28. Arunachal Pradesh       41.71         29. Dadra & Nagar Haveli       39.45  | Territory                          |               |
| 2. Mizoram       81.23         3. Lakshadweep       79.23         4. Chandigarh       78.73         5. Goa       76.96         6. Delhi       76.09         7. Pondicherry       74.91         8. Andaman & Nicobar Islands       73.74         9. Daman & Diu       73.58         10. Tamil Nadu       63.72         11. Himachal Pradesh       63.54         12. Mabarashtra       63.05         13. Nagaland       61.30         14. Manipur       60.96         15. Gujarat       60.91         16. Tripura       60.39         17. West Bengal       57.72         18. Punjab       57.14         19. Sikkim       56.53         20. Karnataka       55.98         21 Haryana       55.33         22. Assam       53.42         23. Orissa       48.55         24. Meghalaya       48.26         25. Andhra Pradesh       45.11         26. Madhya Pradesh       43.45         27. Uttar Pradesh       41.71         28. Arunachal Pradesh       41.71         29. Dadra & Nagar Haveli       39.45         30. Rajasthan       38.81 <th>India</th> <th>52.11</th>   | India                              | 52.11         |
| 4. Chandigarh 5. Goa 6. Delhi 76.96 6. Delhi 77. Pondicherry 8. Andaman & Nicobar Islands 9. Daman & Diu 10. Tamil Nadu 11. Himachal Pradesh 12. Maharashtra 13. Nagaland 14. Manipur 15. Gujarat 16. Tripura 17. West Bengal 17. West Bengal 18. Punjab 19. Sikkim 19. Sikkim 19. Sikkim 20. Karnataka 21 Haryana 22. Assam 23. Orissa 24. Meghalaya 25. Andhra Pradesh 27. Uttar Pradesh 28. Arunachal Pradesh 29. Dadra & Nagar Haveli 30. Rajasthan 38. 81   | 1. Kerala                          | -90.59        |
| 4. Chandigarh 5. Goa 6. Delhi 76.96 6. Delhi 77. Pondicherry 8. Andaman & Nicobar Islands 9. Daman & Diu 10. Tamil Nadu 11. Himachal Pradesh 12. Maharashtra 13. Nagaland 14. Manipur 15. Gujarat 16. Tripura 17. West Bengal 17. West Bengal 18. Punjab 19. Sikkim 19. Sikkim 19. Sikkim 20. Karnataka 21 Haryana 22. Assam 23. Orissa 24. Meghalaya 25. Andhra Pradesh 27. Uttar Pradesh 28. Arunachal Pradesh 29. Dadra & Nagar Haveli 30. Rajasthan 38. 81   | 2. Mizoram                         | 81.23         |
| 4. Chandigarh 5. Goa 6. Delhi 76.96 6. Delhi 77. Pondicherry 8. Andaman & Nicobar Islands 9. Daman & Diu 10. Tamil Nadu 11. Himachal Pradesh 12. Maharashtra 13. Nagaland 14. Manipur 15. Gujarat 16. Tripura 17. West Bengal 17. West Bengal 18. Punjab 19. Sikkim 19. Sikkim 19. Sikkim 20. Karnataka 21 Haryana 22. Assam 23. Orissa 24. Meghalaya 25. Andhra Pradesh 27. Uttar Pradesh 28. Arunachal Pradesh 29. Dadra & Nagar Haveli 30. Rajasthan 38. 81   | <ol><li>Lakshadweep</li></ol>      |               |
| 5. Goa       76.96         6. Delhi       76.09         7. Pondicherry       74.91         8. Andaman & Nicobar Islands       73.74         9. Daman & Diu       73.58         10. Tamil Nadu       63.72         11. Himachal Pradesh       63.54         12. Maharashtra       63.05         13. Nagaland       61.30         14. Manipur       60.96         15. Gujarat       60.91         16. Tripura       60.39         17. West Bengal       57.72         18. Punjab       57.14         19. Sikkim       56.53         20. Karnataka       55.98         21 Haryana       55.33         22. Assam       53.42         23. Orissa       48.55         24. Meghalaya       48.26         25. Andhra Pradesh       45.11         26. Madhya Pradesh       43.45         27. Uttar Pradesh       41.71         28. Arunachal Pradesh       41.71         29. Dadra & Nagar Haveli       39.45         30. Rajasthan       38.81   | 4. Chandigarh                      | 78.73         |
| 7. Pondicherry 8. Andaman & Nicobar Islands 7. 73.74 9. Daman & Diu 73.58 10. Tamil Nadu 63.72 11. Himachal Pradesh 63.54 12. Maharashtra 63.05 13. Nagaland 61.30 14. Manipur 60.96 15. Gujarat 60.91 16. Tripura 60.39 17. West Bengal 18. Punjab 57.72 18. Punjab 57.14 19. Sikkim 56.53 20. Karnataka 55.98 21. Haryana 55.33 22. Assam 53 42 23. Orissa 48.55 24. Meghalaya 48.26 25. Andhra Pradesh 26. Madhya Pradesh 27. Uttar Pradesh 28. Arunachal Pradesh 29. Dadra & Nagar Haveli 30. Rajasthan 38 81  | 5. Goa                             |               |
| 7. Pondicherry 8. Andaman & Nicobar Islands 7. 73.74 9. Daman & Diu 73.58 10. Tamil Nadu 63.72 11. Himachal Pradesh 63.54 12. Maharashtra 63.05 13. Nagaland 61.30 14. Manipur 60.96 15. Gujarat 60.91 16. Tripura 60.39 17. West Bengal 18. Punjab 57.72 18. Punjab 57.14 19. Sikkim 56.53 20. Karnataka 55.98 21. Haryana 55.33 22. Assam 53 42 23. Orissa 48.55 24. Meghalaya 48.26 25. Andhra Pradesh 26. Madhya Pradesh 27. Uttar Pradesh 28. Arunachal Pradesh 29. Dadra & Nagar Haveli 30. Rajasthan 38 81  | 6. Delhi                           | 76 09         |
| 8. Andaman & Nicobar Islands 73.74 9. Daman & Diu 73.58 10. Tamil Nadu 63.72 11. Himachal Pradesh 63.54 12. Maharashtra 63.05 13. Nagaland 61.30 14. Manipur 60.96 15. Gujarat 60.91 16. Tripura 60.39 17. West Bengal 57.72 18. Punjab 57.14 19. Sikkim 56.53 20. Karnataka 55.98 21 Haryana 55.33 22. Assam 53.42 23. Orissa 48.55 24. Meghalaya 48.26 25. Andhra Pradesh 45.11 26. Madhya Pradesh 43.45 27. Uttar Pradesh 41.71 28. Arunachal Pradesh 41.22 29. Dadra & Nagar Haveli 39.45 30. Rajasthan 38.81  | 7. Pondicherry                     |               |
| Islands       73.74         9. Daman & Diu       73.58         10. Tamil Nadu       63.72         11. Himachal Pradesh       63.54         12. Maharashtra       63.05         13. Nagaland       61.30         14. Manipur       60.96         15. Gujarat       60.91         16. Tripura       60.39         17. West Bengal       57.72         18. Punjab       57.14         19. Sikkim       56.53         20. Karnataka       55.98         21 Haryana       55.33         22. Assam       53.42         23. Orissa       48.55         24. Meghalaya       48.26         25. Andhra Pradesh       45.11         26. Madhya Pradesh       43.45         27. Uttar Pradesh       41.71         28. Arunachal Pradesh       41.22         29. Dadra & Nagar Haveli       39.45         30. Rajasthan       38.81   |                                    |               |
| 10. Tamil Nadu       63.72         11. Himachal Pradesh       63.54         12. Maharashtra       63.05         13. Nagaland       61.30         14. Manipur       60.96         15. Gujarat       60.91         16. Tripura       60.39         17. West Bengal       57.72         18. Punjab       57.14         19. Sikkim       56.53         20. Karnataka       55.98         21. Haryana       55.33         22. Assam       53.42         23. Orissa       48.55         24. Meghalaya       48.26         25. Andhra Pradesh       45.11         26. Madhya Pradesh       43.45         27. Uttar Pradesh       41.71         28. Arunachal Pradesh       41.22         29. Dadra & Nagar Haveli       39.45         30. Rajasthan       38.81   |                                    | 73.74         |
| 11. Himachal Pradesh       63.54         12. Maharashtra       63.05         13. Nagaland       61.30         14. Manipur       60.96         15. Gujarat       60.91         16. Tripura       60.39         17. West Bengal       57.72         18. Punjab       57.14         19. Sikkim       56.53         20. Karnataka       55.98         21 Haryana       55.33         22. Assam       53.42         23. Orissa       48.55         24. Meghalaya       48.26         25. Andhra Pradesh       45.11         26. Madhya Pradesh       43.45         27. Uttar Pradesh       41.71         28. Arunachal Pradesh       41.22         29. Dadra & Nagar Haveli       39.45         30. Rajasthan       38.81   | 9. Daman & Diu                     |               |
| 11. Himachal Pradesh 12. Maharashtra 13. Nagaland 14. Manipur 15. Gujarat 16. Tripura 16. Tripura 17. West Bengal 18. Punjab 19. Sikkim 19. Sikkim 19. Sikkim 10. Karnataka 10. Karnataka 11. Haryana 12. Assam 13. Orissa 14. Meghalaya 15. Andhra Pradesh 16. Madhya Pradesh 17. Uttar Pradesh 18. Arunachal Pradesh 18. Arunachal Pradesh 18. Arunachal Pradesh 18. Aragar Haveli 18. Rajasthan 18. Assam | 10. Tamil Nadu                     | 63.72         |
| 13. Nagaland       61.30         14. Manipur       60.96         15. Gujarat       60.91         16. Tripura       60.39         17. West Bengal       57.72         18. Punjab       57.14         19. Sikkim       56.53         20. Karnataka       55.98         21. Haryana       55.33         22. Assam       53.42         23. Orissa       48.55         24. Meghalaya       48.26         25. Andhra Pradesh       45.11         26. Madhya Pradesh       41.71         28. Arunachal Pradesh       41.71         28. Arunachal Pradesh       41.22         29. Dadra & Nagar Haveli       39.45         30. Rajasthan       38.81   | <ol><li>Himachal Pradesh</li></ol> |               |
| 13. Nagaland       61.30         14. Manipur       60.96         15. Gujarat       60.91         16. Tripura       60.39         17. West Bengal       57.72         18. Punjab       57.14         19. Sikkim       56.53         20. Karnataka       55.98         21 Haryana       55.33         22. Assam       53.42         23. Orissa       48.55         24. Meghalaya       48.26         25. Andhra Pradesh       45.11         26. Madhya Pradesh       41.71         27. Uttar Pradesh       41.71         28. Arunachal Pradesh       41.22         29. Dadra & Nagar Haveli       39.45         30. Rajasthan       38.81  |                                    |               |
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| 15. Gujarat       60.91         16. Tripura       60.39         17. West Bengal       57.72         18. Punjab       57.14         19. Sikkim       56.53         20. Karnataka       55.98         21 Haryana       55.33         22. Assam       53.42         23. Orissa       48.55         24. Meghalaya       48.26         25. Andhra Pradesh       45.11         26. Madhya Pradesh       43.45         27. Uttar Pradesh       41.71         28. Arunachal Pradesh       41.22         29. Dadra & Nagar Haveli       39.45         30. Rajasthan       38.81   | 14. Manipur                        | 60.96         |
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| 17. West Bengal       57.72         18. Punjab       57.14         19. Sikkim       56.53         20. Karnataka       55.98         21 Haryana       55.33         22. Assam       53 42         23. Orissa       48.55         24. Meghalaya       48.26         25. Andhra Pradesh       45.11         26. Madhya Pradesh       43.45         27. Uttar Pradesh       41.71         28. Arunachal Pradesh       41.22         29. Dadra & Nagar Haveli       39.45         30. Rajasthan       38 81   | 16. Tripura                        |               |
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| 22. Assam       53 42         23. Orissa       48.55         24. Meghalaya       48.26         25. Andhra Pradesh       45.11         26. Madhya Pradesh       43.45         27. Uttar Pradesh       41.71         28. Arunachal Pradesh       41.22         29. Dadra & Nagar Haveli       39.45         30. Rajasthan       38 81  | 21 Haryana                         | 55.33         |
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| 30. Rajasthan 38 81  |                                    |               |
| 31. Bihar 38.54  |                                    | 38 81         |
|  | 31. Bihar                          | 38.54         |

Excludes Jammu & Kashmir where the 1991 Census it yet to be held.

(Source: Census of India, Series-I India Paper-I of 1991).

illiteracy and exploitation and so on.

In October-November 1977 KSSP organized a long march called the 'Science Jatha' (science procession) which travelled from one end of Kerala to the other, visited nearly 900 villages and spoke to more than 500 thousand people. The jatha reached every nook and corner of Kerala. It was a unique experiment covering 11,000 kms. of district and village roads. Booklets on selected themes were distributed among the people. One of these was entitled, 'Make Literacy Work a People's Movement'; according to this booklet:

'No programme will succeed without people's support. This is so, either for a simple panchayat road or for an entire Five Year Plan. In all countries which had achieved universal literacy one can see the support of the entire people for the movement. It is the failure to attract the attention of the mass of people that is the cause of the lack of success in the literacy programmes in our country. If it gets degenerated into an ordinary official activity, carried out for the sake of the government, nothing can save it.

'It should be possible to convert literacy work into a big people's movement. That is the guarantee for success. People should understand the ill effects of mass illiteracy. They should become convinced of the necessity for mass action. Newspapers and other media have an important role to play in this. In fact there is no other activity like this, in which each and every one in the society can participate. The literates and the illiterates, individuals and organisations, school students and vice chancellors—all can participate in this....'

I hus Parishad launched its crusade against illiteracy in 1977 itself. Later on, the KSSP units and Rural Science Forums started to take up adult literacy work in villages, voluntarily, as a follow-up of the jatha. Although there was no detailed plan or programme of action, even isolated activity here and there in the state, and the extension of the National Adult Education Programme into the state (NAEP and SAEP) compelled the organization to look into the problem of illiteracy in depth. As a result, during the annual worker's camp of KSSP, held at Malampuzha in December 1977, a working group on adult education was formed to study the problem in all its aspects and present a report to the organization.

A project proposal was prepared and submitted to the organization on 31 January 1978. Based on the then population of Kerala, the project visualized an expenditure of Rs. 11 crores for the complete eradication of illiteracy from the state. The proposal listed the topics to be handled in literacy classes, the duration of the classes, the details of the centres visualized, the resources, the

method of training instructors etcetera. Some rough idea regarding the constitution of the machinery for carrying out this work and the method for mobilizing resources were also spelt out.

By this time the central government had already introduced the National Adult Education Programme (NAEP). Having studied the problem of illiteracy in Kerala in all its minute details, KSSP decided to join forces with the NAEP. A project proposal to open 568 adult education centres in 142 panchayats of the state as a first experiment was prepared and submitted to the State Adult Education Department to be forwarded to the Directorate of Adult Education, Government of India. The proposal was never forwarded. Disappointed by the lackadaisical functioning of the State Adult Education Department, the KSSP decided to withdraw from the field.

However, the KSSP continued to develop its own teaching and learning materials and instructors' guides. When the draft of the National Policy on Education was subjected to nationwide discussion in 1985, literacy was again take up in right earnest by the KSSP. It was in complete agreement with the view expressed in the draft document (para 4:2) that 'the whole nation must pledge itself to the eradication of illiteracy.... The central and state governments, political parties, and their mass organizations, the mass media and educational institutions must commit themselves to mass literacy programmes of diverse na-

During a National Seminar on Science Education held at Thiruvanthapuram between 7 and 10 November 1985, the question of literacy was brought back into the agenda. Among the issues raised by the participants in this connection was the question of how to demonstrate that eradication of illiteracy is possible. To this question KSSP responded by stating that it would chalk out a programme to eradicate illiteracy from Kerala within the coming five years. From then onwards, the entire organization concentrated on finding ways

and means to develop a methodology for total literacy programmes.

In 1986 KSSP prepared a draft project proposal entitled 'War Against Illiteracy' and submitted it to the Ministry of Human Resource Development. Through this project KSSP hoped to win the intellectual as well as emotional commitment of the people to the idea of liberation from illiteracy. However, the project formulation later proved defective in the sense that it both underestimated the problems involved and was over-optimistic about solving them. It also failed, as in 1978, to suggest how governmental efforts and the people's efforts could be integrated into a single planned programme.

ertain favourable conditions made it possible to rectify these defects in the 1988 programme at Ernakulam. The district collector of Ernakulam, KR Rajan, was a life-member of KSSP and its former vice-president. KSSP suggested to him that if he took the initiative, they could together plan to eradicate illiteracy from Ernakulam district. A detailed project proposal was therefore drafted and submitted to the National Literacy Mission. The project-Lead Kindly Lightwas approved and entrusted to the KSSP. It aimed to make all the illiterates in the district, in the age group of 5 to 60, literate within a period of one year. The actual number of such people was about 1.74 lakhs.

The project envisaged the mobilization, without any remuneration, of about 15,000 volunteers as instructors and about 500 as mastertrainers. Many activists and organizers felt that this was merely day-dreaming, that enough volunteers would not come forth. But the actual turnout surpassed even the most optimistic expectations. More than 21,000 volunteer instructors and 1,200 volunteer master-trainers came forward. For the first time after Independence one could again feel that the spirit of service and sense of patriotism has not evaporated, that there is still a lot of essential goodness dormant within the society.

Within four to five months of launching the Brnakulam prog-

ramme it became clear that a more ambitious programme could be contemplated to make the entire state of Kerala literatel Accordingly, a proposal was drafted and submitted to the chief minister of Kerala. Later, the education minister forwarded this proposal to the National Literacy Mission.

he project envisaged the enrolment of three million learners out of an estimated number of about four million illiterates and semiliterates. The total expense was estimated at Rs. 300 million. The National Literacy Mission approved the project in principle, but limited its grant to Rs. 30 million, over and above the usual grant for the Rural Functional Literacy Programme (RFLP). Later, UNICEF extended support with a grant of Rs. 12 million.

The total amount received by the Kerala Saksharatha Samithi, which executed the project, was Rs. 58 million: Rs 30 million as special grant, Rs. 16 million as the RFLP grant and Rs. 12 million from UNICEF. Besides this, the Kerala government lent the service of about 1,600 of its employees, mostly from the field of education, to work as full-time coordinators at various levels.

A comprehensive door-to-door survey was carried out on 8 April 1990, by 400,000 volunteers. The survey estimated the number of illiterates in the age group 5-60 at about 2.2 million, of them, about 1.7 million were enrolled and 1.2 million were supposed to have attained the NLM level of literacy. About 230,000 volunteer instructors, 20,000 mastertrainers and 2000 resource persons worked voluntarily for this project. They came from different mass organizations, cultural organizations, youth, workers of political parties etcetera. There were nearly 15,000 committees at ward, panchayat, project and district levels.

Almost every citizen of Kerala contributed something or the other towards this programme, which really did cut across caste, communal and political differences. This is not to say that such differences were ironed out or that there were no undercurrents of hostility. But for the

first time it became necessary that these hostilities be expressed in terms of 'better performance'.

The Kerala Literacy Programme was, as mentioned earlier, implemented by the Kerala Saksharatha Samithi headed by the chief minister. Six other cabinet ministers, several secretaries, representatives of all major political parties and mass organizations were members of this Samithi. Day-to-day implementation was looked after by an executive committee headed by the minister for rural development. P K Sivanandan of the IAS functioned as the secretary of the Samithi. There were. as already mentioned, people's committees right down to the ward level. The project implementation structure consisted of a state coordination centre, 13 district coordinating centres, 43 projects and about 850 sub-projects, with a total full-time staff strength of about 160. Several activities like village parliaments, educational tours, family commu-nions, educational exhibitions etcetera were innovated at various places in the course of the programme.

A his is not to suggest that the sailing was entirely smooth throughout the project period. There were many problems. One set originated from the lack of commitment from some full-time officers and convenors of popular committees. Another set of problems arose from the hostility, often open, of a number of district collectors, especially of Kottayam and Palakkad, towards this programme. It is rumoured that this hostility was politically motivated It took different forms, like putting wrong people on the job. non-cooperation with people's committees, false reporting and so on.

There are today about 500,000 semi-literates and an equal number of illiterates in the state. A good many of them too could have been made literate, had some of the collectors, some of the officers and some of the popular committees been more sincere. Notwithstanding these deficiencies, the Kerala Total Literacy Programme developed into a true people's movement for literacy and became a model and training ground for the rest of India.

### Rewind to childhood

PEGGY MOHAN

to return to childhood
after living a century
is how to decipher signs
without being a learned sage
to return to being suddenly
as fragile as a second
to return to feeling profoundly
like a child face to face with God
that is what I feel myself
in this instant of creation

Violeta Parra Volver a los discisiete (tr. from the orig. Spanish)

THERE is a very special pain that comes when we return to childhood and turn a lifetime's learning into the raw ingredients of a new creation. In poetry, music, art, our first true steps have the simplicity of a child's, all our worldly shields and sophistication vanish, and we are bewildered at the awkward new self we see. Where is all the verbal dexterity we had when we translated the thoughts of others? The skill with the brush we could command when we executed commercial graphics? The instinct for orchestration that was ours when we improved the songs of the singer?

The journey back to the source began in a little pre-school in Delhi, where Hindi-speaking parents had anxiously sent their little ones to give them a head-start for the killing admission tests that barred their entry to the 'good' schools of Delhi. The school needed a music teacher to teach the children nursery rhymes. English nursery rhymes.

Most of the nursery rhymes were little stories, full of word-play and fun. But the little faces showed no sign of this. The children could not understand these songs, let alone enjoy them. They were simply participating in a mysterious educational rite. And then the magnitude of the sin we were committing hit with full force. We were initiating these children into a lifetime of living with incomprehension. We were giving them the keys to a fancy world where their parents' wisdom and their own everyday experiences could be of little use to them. We had begun to stultify these bright young kids. What a head-start!

When the Gods wish to bless us, what they bestow is a failure so unequivocal that we are forced to pause, think afresh, and then retrace our steps, back-back-back to the moment of our great mistake. This way we get a chance to start again, later but wiser, and this time, walking true.

It is axiomatic, in the study of biological memory, that significant growth must entail an erasure of earlier patterns that might conflict with the coherence of a more mature system. This, in layman's language, is called 'forgetting'. We cannot go through life simply adding on unconnected memories. When we learn, what we actually do is give up precious 'truths' of once upon a time in exchange for an open road of new discovery.

So, too, spoke Piaget, the Swiss psychologist who has done perhaps the most comprehensive work on child development. Piaget saw a phased plateau landscape of development and learning fully in harmony with the brave new world of evolutionary biology, with its step-jump epigenetic landscape of punctuated equilibria, of catastrophe theory mathematics, with its topography of sharp rises and level plateaux, and the ankh michauli world of quantum mechanics. Specifically, Piaget found each stage of childhood to be self-contained, and with its own internally consistent system of logic.

And Bettelheim found that things like animism, fairy-tales and 'unscientific' beliefs, and all that old, old lore that has evolved with mankind over eternity, were not at all inconsistent with the development, later on, of mature scientific reasoning. They actually helped, once that stage had worked its way through to a happy conclusion. They gave an adequate and workable account of the little world the child lived in, and that was the only meaningful start they needed.

Piaget, in harmony with the age of descriptive social sciences, had drawn his conclusions about child development not from unrooted abstraction, but from observing children in natural situations. And a beautiful tautology was born: children could learn what they were ready to learn. A wonderful testimonial of trust in natural order!

The linguistic implications, too, were clear. Children could learn only in a language they were ready to learn in, one meaningful to them,

one that represented their world. Not a code used by adults and strangers. Not English, despite the hopes and dreams of all the adults who yearn for 'national integration'. No. Children would only learn easily in a language they knew well, beyond structure, beyond textbook 'rules', a language which they could take for granted. Yes, if later on a new environment demanded that they know English, and populated their world with friends who spoke English, they would learn English instantly. But no sense in preparing for that day—except, perhaps, by teaching English as a separate subject, like the Japanese do. For our Hindi heartland-Hindil Fun and fantasia, and the best modern technology can offer-in Hindil

It is a beautiful sight when a screen clears, softly, to replace an image of night with a gentle day-light. And even more beautiful is the sight of many little pairs of eyes dancing with excitement in a brighter world that made sense.

Hindi rhymes, set to music, metamorphosed into little songs. Hindi akshars turned into magical little creatures, and Hindi shabds turned into a forest full of animals, all looking at the children and smiling. And numbers came to life. Anything we wanted! We improvised, and we improved, because these things were ours to improvise and improvel Now the time had come to end Sesame Street's multinational ashvamedha. The UGC Pre-School Television Project was dreamed into life, and a brand new team was fielded, to 'play' for India.

The atmosphere energized, and our gates closed. The multinational horse stopped — outside. Inside we must get to work. It was already late, and we were determined to do a full research and design job, from scratch. So — a 'designer series', incorporating all the most current research findings the world over about children, learning, and television, addressing all the painful questions about the high correlation between media 'spoonfeeding' in the West and their falling literacy rates and the rampant underachievement in their schools. And no one had the answers that would help us. It

was 'hitoriboshi no yoru'—a night to walk alone!

And we would begin with who we were, what we used to do when times were better, and what we wanted for our best future. The crippling imitation of an alien West must



'and the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us': Azad, evolving from a calligraph into a 'paper tiger'!

end. It was time to place our faith in our own living environment, and our own inborn sense of mission. For the forgotten children of India—a song of hope to light their way.

Long, long ago, as far back as anyone could remember, there lived an India who was just learning to read. And what did we read, longlong ago? Was it textbooks, scriptures, stories? No-no-no! When that younger India decided to star treading and writing, what we read and wrote, mostly, were legal documents, stock lists and balance sheets. Not poetry, not stories, not songs, not prayers, and not children's lessons, not those living things that needed the freedom of orality to keep growing. Literacy was need-based, and intensely secular.

Here again we retraced our steps, back-back-back to the Golden Age, when we lived in the system that we built, when the 'control track' of our history tape was still unbroken. Our

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mission was to reach the servo break' that had warped the smooth flow of our history and prefaced these long years of failure and doubt —and mend it. This would mean going back to the last healthy spot in our past, setting a new 'in-point', and going on 'assemble' mode. If the tape of our destiny was fundamentally undamaged, our best past would flow smoothly into a new present, with an open-ended future. But that would mean sacrificing everything we had tried to do after the moment of rupture: the 'assembleedit' would erase this present like morning light erases a bad dream.

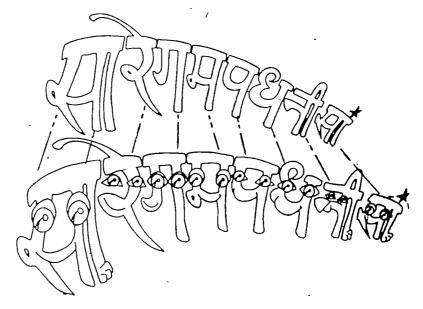
And the last clear frame in our past showed an Indian 'landscape of literacy', a living environment that called for a number of 'literate' skills as part of people's daily lives. Counting, sorting, listing, noting, reading signposts, writing letters—and initiating little children into the literate world they were to inherit. Some people wrote for other people, some people read to other people. Some people kept track of exact quantities, distances, dates and events. Some people even used the tools of literacy to record for posterity their favourite poems, stories, plays and songs. A pulsating, living Indian world. A world that kept a place ready for each child, and prepared him for the work it would need of him. A world unto itself! A world in harmony with natural order!

Here, at last, was our dreamspace, that magic bridge between past, present and future, between pre-literacy, literacy and high literacy, between village and town, child and adult. Here was TAR-RAM-TU!

TAR-RAM-TU knows it is only a TV programme, and it knows it cannot guide and teach a child as well as a parent or a teacher could. Because there really is no substitute in the world for a loving parent, or a teacher who inspires children to do their best. A TV programme cannot listen to a child, it cannot insist on a classroom routine, it cannot give love. It knows it can be switched off at any time if the child does not like it. TAR-RAM-TU, like its shabd kutta, who dreamed of being a real live dog, wishes it could be a real live world.

And so with its images and sounds, it reaches out to bring learning through 'imaging'. Imaging means conjuring up a world, a world so like the one its audience lives in, full of characters and events so like the ones the audience sees every day, that the audience identifies with it

read them. Imagine a name, written on a page, coming to life as a 'paper tiger' when someone reads him: 'Azad!' Imagine the sargam coming alive and 'singing itself'. Or k the kachua (tortoise) having a race against kh the khargosh (hare), where k must come first, before kh. Imagine



'somewhere, over the rainbow':
an akshar chorus line gets ready to sing the sargam!

immediately. What imaging does, then, is extrapolate ahead to a consistent but 'empowered' future, where the surrogate audience on the screen is stronger, more knowledgeable, the children more confident, and everyone more in command of his life. Imaging presents a world that expects little children to learn whatever they need to learn without undue struggle. Imaging is giving a glimpse of our best future.

And straightaway the little children watching should feel a sense of immense security: the Indian world we live in, our parents, our families, we ourselves, we are all fine! We need to learn only because we are little, and growing, because we like to learn, and because life moves on bringing so many new and interesting things to us. All the drift, the foundering, the frustration, the desperation to be like 'people who know English' would vanish before the magnetism of the healing image.

Imagine a book full of words that run away because nobody wants to Hisabi, the counting parrot, counting himself alive: a 'perfect 10'!

Reading is not about deciphering symbols that have some independent existence in a text. It is an interaction with another mind, addressing a text to negotiate meaning. And we bring into that activity a lifetime of experience and expectation about what we are going to find in the text. If the text is vastly different in its content or structure from anything we have seen before, if the writer has dreamt a dream we cannot share, or encoded his thoughts in a format we do not know, we find that text 'difficult', or boring. There is no smooth recognition process, no 'mindlock' with the writer, so that our thoughts can flow at a natural speed. The interaction breaks down. We give up, or we dissect and decipher. We do not read.

So at the heart of the 'landscape of literacy' is the story, the oldest of the forms in which man has organized and recorded his ideas to share with others. Older, far older than literate man's documents, lists and spatial descriptions, the story, with its inherent time-pulse and its cultivated 'sync-lock' with its listeners' minds, has grown up with our species and is the best beginning for our leap into the brave new world of literacy.

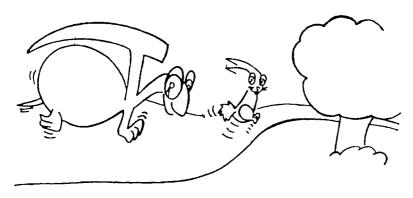
What we do when we use 'story grammar' as our point of departure towards literate thought is set up a system of biases in the child's mind which constitute a 'software' for efficiently addressing text information. This is known as 'semantically driven', or 'top down' processing, whereby there is an intrinsic harmony between the way information gets encoded for transmission and the child's cultivated software for entering 'mindlock' with the text and extracting the essential meaning.

Syntactically driven, or 'bottom up' strategies also have a role to play, which is why we persist in teaching children intrinsically meaningless alphabetic symbols in isolation ('a,b,c,d...') and formalized processes of word and sentence formation (grammar 'rules'). These strategies do contribute, but only to an addressal of the few utterly unfamiliar items we find in any text we read. But these 'data-driven' strategies are too slow, too oblivious of meaning, too lacking in global perspective, to be the bedrock of the

to us, what we need to read. The old Piaget tautology!

his is high literacy, the fusion of the two opposing strategies of 'data driven' and 'semantically driven' processing into a single repertoire, a repertoire nourished and expanded directly by the breadth and depth of the experiences we live through. Here it all comes together. The more knowledge we bring to the interaction with the text, the more meaning we will find. 'Literacy' and learning have fused. Literacy is now no longer an extra skill: it is cognition itself!

A television programme is not the best place to set about drilling prescribed information into children, or for teaching children to replicate examples of a time-honoured skill. Nol In any case, one is intensely sceptical about sacrosanct messages, because they seem to close the child's mind, and this is dangerous, because the complex problems our planet will face in years to come will call for the ultimate in imaginative thinking as we look for solutions. Seeking solutions, not accessing 'correct' answers. We do not know the best answers. They have not been thought up yet. And we will not be the ones to think them. That is why it is so crucially important that we give all our pre-school children, the only Indians whose minds are still fresh and free, the best preparation we can.



the famous race
between k the kachua (tortolse) and kh the khargosh (hare)
and, of course, k must come first, before kh!

experience of true reading. Reading has a more environmental logic to it: we can read only what is familiar

And we think we know where to start. We think we can see a road, an endless road, where our children might walk, and ultimately go further than our poor eyes can see. A road with experiences in associative thinking, pattern recognition in space, time and theme, dreaming impossible dreams, empathy with creatures that seem at first unlike ourselves, moments of making judgements, moments of making judgements, and through it all, growing in confidence and wisdom.

One side of that road builds receptiveness: children learn how to 'read' and understand what others before them have thought. And the other side of that road builds their own powers of creation, always in harmony with what their world knows about, what their world can understand. This 'creative' side of the road is about knowing how to fashion external models of what we see inside our heads, by a pencil moving on a page, making a picture, by a plasticine model, by description, by dramatization, by improvising song, or by making up stories for others to read or hear. Here the reading and listening processes work in reverse: here ideas are organized into a spatial distribution, a temporal sequence, a hierarchy of importance, in harmony with a shared perceptual grid, for others to understand and enjoy.

his meant drawing up agenda that would emerge as a 'curriculum of experiences' to light our way along the endless road. Lists and lists: of natural experiences that would matrix the dramatic action, socio-emotional issues, 'literate' experiences from both sides of the endless road, traditional cognitive processes ('analog mode') and their 'modern' counterparts ('digital mode'), academic goals, interesting games and activities, and the most important list of all: the list of things children themselves wonder about, and ask about.

When a television programme has assumed more or less its final shape, the time has come to mix the sound, which is distributed along separate audio channels, onto a single final track: here we enhance, there we fade down, over there we erase altogether, but everywhere we blend the whole into a single sound that can no longer be separated.

This is the metaphor of fusion that underlies the intermingling of the diverse streams of thought that have worked together to dream the programme. In the beginning was tradition: the Indian landscape welive in, the most inspiring people we know, the music we have sung, the poems and stories we have heard, the puppets we have seen, the television programmes we have enjoyed. Then came all the new things we wanted to say as the world moved on, and the demands made by the new and alien television medium. Pace. Two-dimensionality. Colour enhancement. Variety. Finish. Repeatability.



Hisabl, the counting parrot, coming alive as a 'perfect 10' !

Our traditional settings were fine, but they needed a culturally consistent colour enhancement. Our traditional role models were fine, but they needed the stylization of twodimensionality. Our songs had to be shorter, with less interludes. Our stories had to lock onto television pace, and television 'story grammar'. Traditional puppets had to become muppets, with biomechanical input into the design of their articulation and movement, with the endless 'cloning' possibilities of fibreglass moulding, with the 'seamless' finish of plastic surgery suturing.

Traditional artwork had to accept the ergonomic superiority of inter-

national animation technique for the purposes of generating thousands and thousands of closely related images. And our television aesthetic had to absorb and nativize the variety and pace of the 'magazine format', with its breathtaking changes of scene, timed to the rhythm of a child's attention span. The first series run would establish the 'image' as a viable 'carrier wave' for the new experiences, and keep close to the current aesthetic. The next series run would 'energize' the wave!

here is something emotionally satisfying in the thought of a new creation which has come of two 'parental' streams. It surprises us, like the child we could never imagine truly before it was actually born. It creates problems, which in turn teach us new possibilities. It seems to be alive, and growing! It 'knows' the journey it had to make.

And again poetry from the southern tip of South America finds harmony with our journey in a far older Asian landspace, singing of the oneness of the singer, the song, and the ones we sing for:

'milonga', oh yes
so I can sing to my people
as I see them forgotten
I present my song
I give them hope

'milonga', oh yes
so I can sing to my people
I sing so I can find them
if they hear me
there is a place for my song

I search for their voice so I can sing their throat is my throat with them I am there come let us walk their road by morning light

from them only
I learned
what, for them, I will bring
with their voice
which is my voice
in 'milonga', I will sing

Hector Negro/Osvaldo Avena Para cantarle a mi gente (tr. from the orig. Spanish)

# Multilingual learning

NANDITA CHAUDHARY and N. SUPARNA

BILINGUALISM is a phenomenon that has received academic attention only in the last two decades. With increasing mobility, the need for common communication systems becomes more relevant. A lot of interest has recently been generated about the cognitive, linguistic and educational implications of bilingualism. The earliest studies of bilinguals were case-studies of children, mostly those growing up with parents who speak different languages.

Research findings from these studies on cognitive and linguistic outcomes of bilingualism have been varied. A view by Jensen (1960) indicates that the bilingual child has several problems and confusions in language learning. Later studies have reported definite advantages for the child in manipulation and effective handling of language (Peal and Lambert, 1962). It is thus extremely important to analyze the cultural context within which multilingualism is found in order to define the real reasons for the difference in the performance of bilinguals and monolinguals. The fact that in many countries bilinguals are also culturally deprived, being recent migrants or from minority groups, cannot be ignored. The issue of cultural variation, social class, educational opportunity and other related factors have to be considered in an analysis of research findings.

Studies of Indian communities clearly demonstrate that bilingualism is not considered to be an exception and most people do learn their mother tongue and another language as part of their socialization process, with little function conflict (Annamalai, 1985). Codeswitching is used effectively to communicate several social messages.

Many of the early studies from the United States have shown several disadvantages of bilingualism, but further probing into the issue indicates that it was not bilingualism but 'biculturalism' that caused most of the difficulty. The majority groups, who spoke languages other than English, were clearly at a social and economic disadvantage in comparison with the English-speaking majority. This is especially significant since USA was found to have the greatest tendency towards monolingualism (Lieberson, 1980).

It is important at this point to understand that bilingualism as an issue is a tricky one. As Elliot puts so well, 'Being bilingual in the International School in Geneva and being bilingual in the streets of Bombay are radically different experiences' (Elliot, 1981, p. 173). Bilingualism can be simultaneous or successive. For the purpose of this paper, the terms bi- or multilingualism shall henceforth refer to simultaneous bilingualism which implies that the child learns the two (or more) languages spoken in the same period of time by perhaps two separate sources. This is true for most of the children in India except in cases where second and third languages are learnt in school or college. The earliest stage of bilingualism is described as the stage of 'mixed speech' which lasts until about the age of two. It is only after this that the child begins to perceive the different languages as different systems.

In a review of language studies, Anandalakshmy (1976) reports that the factor of bilingualism was 'intriguing' because often results of studies on two social groups were concluded without information regarding the language tested as being first or the second language. When children were observed in spontaneous free play situations at home, it seemed that they did not recognize what they spoke as two separate languages. It was evident that one language was 'more dominant, and that by and large, the structure of that language was used while cognates were borrowed from the second one'. Thus the author concludes that there is a fertile field for the study of multilingualism in India. Apart from the official languages there are several dialects and most people are aware of more than one language.

Another characteristic, particularly in urban areas of India, is the importance given to learning English. In spite of some political efforts to counter the trend, a section of the population considers the learning of English indispensable for progress in life. Thus, for many families the status of English is a special one. Due to these features of the linguistic environment in India, we felt it was worth conducting a study of the phenomenon yet again.

Our study was conducted with the objective of investigating language learning and speech patterns among family members in multilingual families with children between 18 and 36 months of age. For this purpose, 30 families residing in New Delhi were identified. The families had the language combinations of Tamil, English and Hindi or Malayalam, English and Hindi. They were originally from southern India, from the states of Tamilnadu and Kerala; Tamil and Malayalam were the native languages of the respective groups. The socio-economic composition of the families was homogeneous, primarily upper-middle socioeconomic status, service-class fami-

There was some variation in family structure: 16 of the 30 were single-unit families whereas the balance were extended with one or two other members outside of the nuclear unit, usually close kin members, residing with the family during the study. In 16 of the families, the mother was employed outside the home. The children of these families were provided substitute care by another person (a family member or a maid). Children attending day-care programmes or any care system outside of the home were not included in the study.

The data were collected over a period of four months and included several tape recordings of half an hour of spontaneous speech of the child and the speech interaction between family members and performance of the children in a structured situation which was uniform for all children in a specific age-group. These items were tested in the concerned languages and required the child to identify, label or describe a given picture. The items were varied according to the age of the child.

Each situation was assessed: (a) speech pattern: number of words of the first, second and third language, frequency of code-switching; (b) quantitative analysis: mean length of utterance i.e. number of words to total number of sentences spoken; (c) qualitative analysis: the details of the structure of speech: holophrases, telegraphic utterances, complete sentences; functions of speech: com-

municative or non-communicative; and the content: nouns, action words.

The major findings of the study indicate that the children do learn the three languages simultaneously and in an informal manner. Some special effort was discernable among parents of the older children (close to three years of age) to focus on expression and vocabulary of English. This could have been due to the motivation towards the goal of attaining admission in a 'good' nursery school programme.

L he general context in which the languages were learnt was found to be fairly situation-specific. For instance, in a family where there were living-in members of the older generation, grandparents or a grand aunt. the usage of the mother-tongue was more obvious. In the single-unit families the parents used more English and Hindi expressions between themselves as well as with the child. This finding is fairly universal (Abbi, 1989). Children from nuclear families also spoke a greater number of English and Hindi words. To demonstrate the situational variation further, it was found that the presence of a Hindi-speaking person, a maid, led to a change in the language environment with usage of Hindi being much higher than in other families.

The overall findings indicate that a child acquiring two or three languages under the circumstances described follows patterns of language development similar to that of monoglots. There is no apparent advancement or delay of the expected level for this age range. Usually, the children employed the syntax of the first language (Tamil or Malayalam) and cognates of the other two languages in the environment. Also, it appeared that though expression and labels in all three languages were understood by the children, they were not treated as separate languages. Thus the children could be said to be in the earliest, the 'mixed phase' of development (Elliot, 1981; Bedi, 1976). The usage of words from English and Hindi, the second and third languages, were also found to be situation-specific as mentioned earlier.

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Another observation was that the mean length of utterance (MLU) of the children was significantly higher in the structured situations as compared with the spontaneous interactions (Table 1). The responses of 18-24 month-olds in structured situations were not analyzed for MLU since most children responded with sounds or single words and not sentences. For instance, a picture of a dog was labelled as 'bow-wow' or 'dogie'.

There were very few children between 18 and 30 months who were capable of code-switching, further strengthening the conclusion that these languages were not understood as separate systems. Beyond 30 months, there was an increased frequency of language switching (Table 2). It was observed that amongst 18-30 month-olds, even in the use of languages in different play situations, they did not recognize them as two separate languages, using both as one composite language.

The correlation between length of utterance and usage of words from the second and third languages was not significant. Thus, word usage was not related to speech development, but rather to family context. With regard to the structure of the children's speech there were clear developmental trends—as expected. The utterances became more complex in structure with a decrease in

TABLE 1

| Age-group | and  | Average |
|-----------|------|---------|
| MLU o     | f Su | bjects  |

| . Age group     | Spontaneous<br>Speech | Structured*<br>Speech |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 18-24<br>(N=7)  | 1.53                  | -                     |
| 24-30<br>(N=8)  | 2.28                  | 3.83                  |
| 30-36<br>(N=15) | 2.77                  | 4.67                  |

<sup>\*18-24</sup> month-olds' responses were not analyzed for MLU in structured situations.

Code\* Switching in a Structured Situation following a Cue '

| Age group (months) | No code<br>switching | Comprehension without code switching | Code-switching Complete in two languages code switching   |
|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| 18-24<br>(N=7)     | 4                    |                                      | 1 Commence of the State of the |
| 24-30<br>(N=8)     | . 6                  | 1                                    |   |
| 30-36<br>(N=15)    | 1                    | 3                                    | 5   |

<sup>\*</sup>Substitute 'language' for 'code'.

TABLE 3

| Structure | of | Speech | with | Age |
|-----------|----|--------|------|-----|
|-----------|----|--------|------|-----|

| Age-group       | Holophrases | Telegraphic    | Complete Sentences % |              |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------|
| (months)        | (%)_        | utterances (%) | Simple               | (Complex)    |
| 18-24<br>(N=7)  | 44.4        | 35.6           | 9.9                  | <del>-</del> |
| 24-30<br>(N=8)  | 30.6        | 5°.6           | 12.0                 | -            |
| 30-36<br>(N=15) | 18.2        | 44.8           | 31.8                 | 4.2          |

the percentage of holophrastic and telegraphic utterances and an increase in complete utterances, both simple and complex (Table 3).

The speech was also analyzed for its function, whether communicative or otherwise, in spontaneous situations. It was found that there was a progressive increase both in communicative as well as non-communicative utterances with age (Table 4). This finding is in conjunction with Vygotsky's proposal regarding private speech. According to him early speech is multi-functional and global. Then there is a differentiation between the egocentric and social speech, and the former is used primarily to guide one's own activities. Thus the function is an outcome of socialization. Gradually, thought is guided by speech moving inwards -'inner speech'. Piaget's proposal implied that egocentric and communicative speech were in fact the path form an autistic to a socialized perspective. Thus social speech always follows egocentric speech, or rather replaces it when the child moves away from subjective fantasy. Thus

developmentally, if Piaget were right, egocentric speech would reduce when socialized speech appeared. This was not found to be the case in this study.

The errors in the speech of the children showed age-related trends. Younger children (18-24 months) frequently made errors of overextension in labelling, whereas older children, overgeneralized verb forms.

TABLE 4

| Function of Speech with Age |   |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Age-group<br>(months)       | Non-commu-<br>nicative<br>speech (no. of<br>utterances) | Communicative speech (no. of utterances) |  |  |
| 18-24<br>(N=7)              | 24  | 145                                      |  |  |
| 24-30<br>(N=8)              | 28  | 124                                      |  |  |
| 30-36<br>(N=15)             | 180   | 490                                      |  |  |

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The child having learnt the verb forms in one language, modifies the same verbs in the other using the same rules. For instance,

सो-ing. (Hindi word for sleep-ing); बोलो-ed (Hindi word for speak-ed).

This further illustrates that the languages were not seen as exclusive and that the child had the capacity to generalize a complex language principle. There were several examples of 'verbal confusion' where the actual sentence is expressed wrongly due to mistakes in the positioning of words. 'Tomorrow I went' instead of 'Yesterday I went'. 'I hit Daddy' to mean 'Daddy hit me'.

Regarding the influence of variables like family structure, maternal employment, gender of child, which were considered important influencing factors, the findings were as follows:

Family Structure: Children from nuclear families were found to have significantly higher mean length of utterance (MLU) for both spontaneous and structured situations in the three age groups. An explanation for this finding has been attempted in carlier studies. The adult-child ratio in a nuclear family is generally favourable towards a greater adaptation of speech for the child. A fewer number of adults may have a greater proportion of utterances that are especially made simple to facilitate the child's understanding. This advantage may not be there for children in large families where adult speech is likely to be dominant. Thus, even though the adult-child ratio appears to be in favour of the child, perhaps the 2:1 ratio is optimal for language learning.

The mother's educational level was not found to have any significant influence on the children's speech. This could be due to the fact that there was very little variation in the educational levels: most mothers were graduates or above. Further, though the employed mothers (n=16) were found to be speaking longer sentences to their children, there were no significant differences in their children's speech as compared with children of unemployed mothers.

TABLE 5

| Average MLU of Boys and Gi | rls with Age |
|----------------------------|--------------|
|----------------------------|--------------|

| Age-group       | Spontaneous  |      | Structured* |      |
|-----------------|--------------|------|-------------|------|
| (months)        | Gtrls        | Boys | Girls       | Boys |
| 18-24<br>(N=7)  | 1.82         | 0.80 |             |      |
| 24-30<br>(N=8)  | 2.55         | 1.84 | 4.08        | 3.43 |
| 30-36<br>(N=15) | <b>2</b> .70 | 2.87 | 4.81        | 4.46 |

\*18-24 month-olds' responses were not analyzed for MLU in structured situations.

The data were also scrutinized to discern gender differences in speech. The findings show that the girls performed significantly better than boys only in the experimental situations. During spontaneous play, no differences were seen in structure, length or function of speech (Table 5).

Adult speech: The speech of the mothers was analyzed to see whether any differences appeared in their use of language. However, it was possible to analyze only the length of utterance and language used. No significant differences appeared in the MLU of the mothers' speech on the basis of family structure or education. However, it was found that the mothers employed outside the home spoke longer sentences to their children. It was also discovered that the working mother was also significantly more likely to be living in a single-unit family. Thus, it was the mother who was employed and living in a nuclear family who was more likely to speak longer sentences to the child.

In extended families, adults tended to use significantly fewer Hindi words with the child when compared with nuclear units. No such differences were found in the use of English words. Additionally the mother tongues—Tamil and Malayalam—where predominant in these homes. The average MLU of the mothers was lower than that of the other family members like father, grandparent or maid, indicating greater adaptation to the child's level of speech development.

In conclusion, it could be said that in a linguistic environment where children are simultaneously and naturally exposed to three lan-

guages, language learning in the early years does not differ from that of monolingual children as far as norms and developmental sequence are concerned The nature of the multilingual environment, which is determined by the family structure, exerts a strong influence on the child's usage of the first, second and third languages even though they are not perceived as separate systems by the children at this early age. Variables of maternal employment, maternal education and gender of child were not significant influences on children's speech in this study.

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### The Indian face of English

YAMUNA KACHRU

THE notion of speech act is a simple one: uttering a string of meaningful sounds is not only performing the act of speaking, but also performing a variety of acts such as informing, questioning, ordering, etcetera via the act of speaking. These latter are the subject matter of the field of research known as speech acts. Philosophers and linguists have been aware of the fact that in discussing meaning in natural languages, determining the truth or falsity of utterances is not enough, since some utterances such as questions or requests are neither true nor false; they are the means of performing acts which may be felicitous or infelicitous. For instance, if one utters the example in 1, depending upon a number of conditions, the request may be judged appropriate or inappropriate, but not true or false:

### 1. Let the dog out!

The request is felicitous if it is uttered by a parent and directed to a child, for instance, but infelicitous if uttered by a student and directed toward his/her teacher. Similarly, there is no conceivable way of determining the truth value of utterances such as the example in 2 below:

### 2. Where is my umbrella?

Again, it may be appropriate or inappropriate to ask such a question under certain conditions; it makes no sense to ask whether it is true or false.

What is of interest to linguists is that speech acts may be direct and literal, as in example 1, or indirect and non-literal, as in example 3:

3. I am sure Mother will appreciate your playing the radio

full blast when she is trying to rest.

Most readers would agree that the speaker who utters 3 is requesting the addressee to desist from playing the radio loudly, but that is not the literal meaning of the sentence in 3. The conditions that are necessary and sufficient for felicitous speech acts, and the inferences that arise from violations of these conditions, are the focus of a great deal of discussion in philosophy, linguistics and related disciplines.<sup>2</sup>

Speech acts in cross-cultural and cross-linguistic situations present even more fascinating challenges, since it is normally the case that the interactants do not share the same background knowledge in such situations. For instance, the following exchange between a foreign visitor and a native of the USA may prove problematic for the foreigner unless he/she is aware of the holidays in the USA.

4. Foreigner: I was thinking of cashing in some cheques on Thursday.

American: Thursday is Thanksgiving Day.

What the foreigner is expected to infer is that the banks will be closed on Thursday, so his/her plans will have to be revised. If the foreigner has never heard of Thanksgiving, obviously the American's utterance is a puzzle for him/her. Note that it is not competence in the English language that is relevant here, it is the sharing of the socio-cultural background knowledge that is crucial for successful communication to occur.

Why people resort to indirect speech acts is a separate question.

<sup>1</sup> For a technical discussion of speech act in philosophy and linguistics, see Austin (1961), Sadock (1974), and Searle (1969).

<sup>2.</sup> For a discussion of indirect speech act, see Morgan (1978) and Scarle (1975).

It is not difficult to guess the reasons: indirect speech acts are more polite, they are more tactful ways of correcting, questioning, reminding, requesting, etcetera. Part of being a competent speaker of a language involves judgements with regard to when to perform direct or indirect speech acts, and when to remain silent. It is obvious that performing and interpreting speech acts in a second or n-th language presents more problems than in a language one grows up with.

hat I want to focus on in this paper is the set of factors involved in interpreting speech acts in literary works in Indian English. As has been suggested recently, acculturation of English in India has left its mark not only on the pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar of the language, but also on the conventions of use of the language followed, by the Indian English speech community (B. Kachru 1983, 1986). This claim will be illustrated here by a discussion of what it takes to interpret intended speech acts in Indian English fiction. The discussion presupposes not only the theoretical framework of pragmatics in general and speech acts in particular, but also of sociolinguistics and ethnography of communication.

Since speech acts are felicitous or infelicitous only within a sociocultural context, i.e., within a speech community, it is necessary to first establish the existence of an Indian English speech community. I would like to suggest that speakers of Indian English form a speech community according to the definition proposed by Dell Hymes, that '...a community sharing rules for the conduct and interpretation speech, and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety' (1972: 54). Recent linguistic research has already established India as a linguistic area on the basis of shared linguistic features (Emeneau 1956, Masica 1976), and South Asia, including India, as a sociolinguistic area by presenting evidence to show that South Asian languages share a 'grammar of culture' in the sense of Bright (1968) and D'Souza (1987). B. Kachru (1983, 1986), D'Souza (1988) and others have also shown that the use of English in India follows the rules of the Indian grammar of culture. And Indian English is the shared variety in the repertoire of all English-knowing Indians.

The following data come from two Indian English novels set in the north (Sahgal 1977, 1988), two in the south (Narayan 1976, 1990) of India, and one dealing with the Indian immigrant experience in the USA (Mukherjee 1990). Insofar as conversations in literary works have to 'ring true' to be convincing, creative literature can be a valuable source of data for speech act research (D'Souza 1991, Nelson 1991, B. Kachru 1987, Y. Kachru 1991). Such data are certainly as 'authentic' as those elicited by questionnaire or role-play-type instruments which are common in cross-cultural speech act research.

will discuss three sets of sociocultural conventions that underlie the conversational interactions in Indian English fiction. One set has to do with politeness, a second with a part of the belief system, and a third with typical attitudes to family relationships.

First, observe the conventions of politeness in the excerpt in 5 (Sahgal 1977: 90-91). The novel is set in Delhi, and the characters participating in the interaction are all upper middle class adults. The occasion is that of a feast at Arvind's home, i.e. the home that he shares with his parents, to celebrate his engagement. Since in the Indian setting, adult sons normally do not move out of the parental home, such celebrations are organized and hosted by parents.

5. Neat pudgy Arvind was placing plump white pieces of chicken on the little hill of rice on his plate. He looked up and saw Devi. 'Hello Aunty. Let me help you.' And when she said she would help herself he strolled off to a corner of the room to eat.

The woman addressed as Aunty is not related to the character Arvind by birth or marriage; she is a friend of Arvind's parents The address form Aunty here expresses a poli-

teness strategy common in verbal interactions in South Asia; even persons unrelated by birth or marriage are addressed by kinship terms to show deference or camaraderie as the occasion demands. As a family friend, the visitor cannot be addressed by the son of the family either by her first name, or by a title such as Miss or Mrs X. Even an acquaintance or a stranger, if older, would not be addressed by a title such as Mr/Sir or Miss/Madam. The kinship term is the only choice if the character is depicted as following the conventions of polite behaviour (see also D'Souza 1988, Sridhar 1991).

A second example of the politeness convention can be seen in the excerpt in 6 below. One of the characters, Ramu, identified as the Talkative Man, is conversing with the Sanskrit teacher in order to persuade the teacher to accept the main character of the novel, Nagraj, as his pupil. The excerpt cited here is part of the small talk leading to the main topic (Narayan 1990: 104):

6. ... The old man was saying, 'You must marry. How long are you going to remain a lone vagrant?'

'Uncle, no one will marry me,' said the Talkative Man in mock sorrow....

Although Ramu is not related to the teacher, he addresses him as *uncle*, following the politeness conventions discussed above.<sup>3</sup>

A third example of the same phenomenon can be seen in the excerpt in 7 (Narayan 1977: 10-11). The context of the interaction is as follows. The lawyer, who is just about to begin his practice, approaches a painter of signs, Raman, to paint a sign for his office. He further insists the sign be painted in a certain way and be installed at a certain auspicious time identified by his astrologer. The conversation cited in 7 takes place when Raman brings the

<sup>3.</sup> The lack of blood relationship with the teacher is explicitly mentioned on p. 112, when Ramu tells Nagraj. I was young when his family lived on Vinayaka Street and I used to hang around playing with his sons.

sign to the lawyer's office-cum-residence for installation.

7. ...A note of discord was struck when the lawyer suddenly said after touching the surface of the board, 'What's this? Dirt? Am I to start my career with dirt on my name?' ...

The auspicious plans seemed to have suddenly come to a halt. Even the gramophone inside ceased, and a bunch of young men, students of the local college, admirers of hippie philosophies, ... came out to see what was going on...

...Raman said with a forced laugh, running his finger over the surface of the board, 'Ohl This is not dirt, only river sand, to give it a stucco effect.'

'What's stucco?' asked the lawyer challengingly.

A hippie-like youth came out to explain, 'Don't you know, uncle? Latest in architectural surfaces.' He was a student of engineering...

'I never asked for it,' said the lawyer. 'I don't want to pay for a lot of sand on my first board.'...

A sudden sense of fair play seized Raman, and he said, I'll write another one for you. Keep this one for the day, because you should not miss the good time.'...

Although several other features of the excerpt cited above could profitably be discussed, I will confine my remarks to only two of them. Note the term used by the hippielike youth in addressing the lawyer. It is quite obvious from the text that the youth is not one of the nephews of the lawyer; in fact, he is a stranger, a student of the college near the lawyer's residence-cumoffice. He addresses the lawyer as uncle, following the conventions of politeness in verbal interactions in India.

The second feature worth noting is the reference to auspicious plans and the good time. In India, it is

common to consult a priest or an astrologer to identify an auspicious day and time to begin a venture. The occasion may be a wedding, an initiation, reporting for a job for the first time, or starting a business or industry. Raman's conciliatory remarks are not merely a promise to right his mistake, they aim at reassuring the lawyer that the dirt will not lead to his missing the auspicious moment for the installation of the sign.

The excerpt in 8 (Sahgal 1988: 148) confirms the belief in astrologically identified good time for a venture. The venture, in the case, is a marriage. The Prince of Vijaygarh is telling his mother, the Queen, that the Parsee woman he is interested in will not marry him. The Queen remarks:

8. 'Marriage can wait until you find a modest woman or I find you one. Astrologically you mustn't marry yet. You'll marry when the constellations are right. Your horoscope says so,' said she with a smile of smug satisfaction...

The Queen displays the attitude conforming to Indian social conventions when she mentions the astrologically appropriate time, and also when she offers to find her son a wife. The excerpt in 9 illustrates the second phenomenon (Mukherjee 1990: 3-4):

9. 'Why are you worrying?' Mrs Dasgupta often asked. 'Just wait and see. Your father will find you an outstanding husband...'

Given the social conventions of marriage and family in India, it is the parents' especially the father's, duty to find a suitable match for a daughter, no matter how old, well-educated, well-placed and financially independent the daughter may be. Mrs Dasgupta is behaving like a normal Indian mother in reassuring her grown daughter not to worry about her marriage.

Just as it is taken for granted that a girl's marriage is her parents' responsibility, similarly, it is taken for granted that a woman is responsible for 'keeping house' for her husband. Consider the excerpt in 10 below (Mukherjee 1990: 70):

10. Meena put her feet up on the coffee table and gave Dimple household hints: wash saris in the bathtub, throw them in the dryer, fold them in half and use spray starch. 'But if the washing machine is in the basement of the building, let Amit do the laundry.'

Dimple laughed at the suggestion. 'I'm sure he wouldn't do the laundry! He hasn't washed a hanky in his life. I wouldn't let him.'

The above interaction takes place in New York. Meena, an earlier immigrant and experienced housewife, is initiating Dimple in the art of living in New York as an Indian housewife. Dimple's reactions are typical; an Indian wife would not think of letting her husband do the laundry. In fact, few Indian husbands would have any idea of how to do the laundry!

Note that the claim is not that users of other varieties of English will necessarily be unable to comprehend and interpret what is going on in the examples cited above. None of the excerpts are unintelligible; but they are fully interpretable only in, the context of conventions of a com-. munity that uses kinship terms as instruments of politeness, has a belief system that accommodates astrology as relevant to human. endeavours, has an institution of arranged marriage, and sharply demarcates the spheres of domestic activities of each spouse in a marriage. A reader unfamiliar with these. contextual factors will either misin-. terpret or have difficulty in interpreting the examples cited above.

The above analyses of select instances of conversation make it clear that speech act theory by itself is not adequate to account for the negotiation of meaning taking place between speakers and addressees/hearers, or writers and readers. A richer theory is needed to study the illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect of locutionary acts. Speech

<sup>4.</sup> This does not, however, mean that all locutionary acts have perfocutionary effects (Searle 1969).

act theory is concerned with the use of language to do things, and provides a universal characterization of linguistic competence in that a speaker has to utter words/phrases/sentences in a language in order to perform certain illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. It does not, however, provide the theoretical or methodological framework to investigate actual interactional language use.

Consequently, by itself, the speech act theory is not sufficient for research on cross-cultural verbal interactions. Sociolinguistics provides a framework for establishing systematic relationships between linguistic items and social variables. Ethnography of communication provides the grid for locating conversational interaction in a sociocultural matrix. Conversational analysis makes it possible to discover the systematic properties of sequential organization of conversational interaction. It is thus reasonable to assume that all these disciplines can contribute to the construction of an integrated theory relevant for cross-cultural speech act research.

The discussion in this paper also shows that literary sources can provide valuable data for identifying culture-specific speech act effects, e.g. the role of kinship terms as polite terms of address in South Asia (and elsewhere). Also, most crosscultural speech act research projects have relied on data collected in roleplay situations for their findings, which cannot be claimed to be as authentic as actual conversations. Data extracted from literary sources that may be said to be more authentic in that they were not specifically produced for speech act research. They were reproduced in writing because in the judgement of the authors, they simulate actual conversations in real life situations. As such, these data should be a welcome addition to the range of data available for crosscultural speech act research.

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# Wiping out English

MARY S. ZURBUCHEN

THE notion of India as a unitary, secular nation-state is today being questioned after 44 years of independence. Tenacious regional separatism and aggressive religious nationalism are producing copious commentary on the Indian heritage, on the political emergence of disparate voices, and on the ability of the central government (any central government) to continue its direction of the country's activities under stable conditions. My entry point into this contemporary debate is language specifically, the question of the authority of English.

India is notably wrestling with a framework of linguistic choices for public and private discourse. This struggle is largely unarticulated, and little understood outside the country. It involves English and the 14 modern languages recognized by the Indian Constitution (the fifteenth, Sanskrit, has significance of a different order). Perhaps nowhere in the world are questions of national identity, education, and socioeconomic and cultural change so fraught with the overt and covert valuations of language, and with the burden of 'the complex dynamic through which words compel'.

My intention here is first to illuminate contemporary perceptions of the authority of English in India. I

will draw on a range of commentary and current events analysis in this interpretation. Secondly, I would like to describe some examples of efforts to counter the authority of English through the medium of regional languages. In doing this, I confess much trepidation in daring to 'cross over' from the Southeast (where I normally sit) to the South Asian side of the regional framework.

It is important to underscore at the outset that English exists in an inordinately complex cultural and linguistic environment in India. This environment is characterized by a long history of language contacts, more recent geographic fragmentation along linguistic lines, widespread grassroots multilingualism, and diverse rich literary traditions. For linguists, there is much relatively uncharted territory; it is surprising to note how few sociolinguistic studies have been done on subjects such as language acquisition or diglossia, for instance.

World opinion generally deplores India's lack of a single national language, viewing this as an obstacle to unification and progress. Yet it should not surprise us to realize that the South Asian and European subcontinents present remarkably similar linguistic profiles in terms of total population, area, and numbers

of political units and literary languages (Maloney 1990:3). But while European ethnolinguistic communities became nations, in India, a central government governs regional groups as heir to a colonial regime. The 'national language' project is thus a notional outcome of political choices and definitions.

It has often been pointed out that English is but the latest in the series of languages added to, or developing within, the Indian complex by movements of peoples and cultures into the subcontinent. In some senses, English merely succeeds Sanskrit, Persian or Urdu in the series of languages of prestige articulating learning, power and privilege at different points in subcontinental history. Yet the authority represented by English today has in many ways superseded the Sanskrit heritage of pandits, not to mention the Persian lingua franca of the Moghuls.

Because of its importance at the time of Independence, English was legally sanctioned by the Constitution as the associate official language of the nation. Emotionally and politically, of course, there could be no question of its being a 'national' language. Hindi was named the official language under this doctrine, and the Constitution projected the gradual replacement of English as an instrument of the state within 15 years after 1950 (Kachru 1983: 90-91). However, this decision has been repeatedly deferred, and both the Official Languages Act of 1963 and its subsequent amendment of 1967 continue the associate status of English. Thus English provides the authoritative texts of the Supreme Court, High Courts and state judiciaries, as well as of Parliament and state legislatures. Most states have 'bilingual' provisions recognizing Hindi or the official state language as authoritative texts along with English (Annamalai, English in *India*, p. 9).

Because of continuing legal provisions for English, it has also retained its place as the official language of national administration. In spite of a complicated policy acknowledging Hindi and official state languages, most government business at both

central and state levels, and the influential Indian Administrative Service, are firmly within the English realm. One Indian Prime Minister, who projected a homespun image as a straightforward rural socialist, and who made his first speech abroad as Prime Minister in Hindi, nevertheless worked entirely in English with his professional staff. As Kachru notes, compared with other spheres such as education, 'there has been less argumentation, vacillation, and change in the role of English in the central government' (1983:89).

This dominance of English in official discourse has frequently proved controversial, with nationalist rhetoric deploring the persistence of the tongue of imperial history and ubiquitous foreign interests. As a recent example, in 1990, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav garnered national attention when he attempted to ban English usage in the government of the nation's biggest state. Surprising amounts of media controversy were generated by Yadav's not-so-novel proposals to stop administrators from writing in English, and to require the study of non-Hindi regional languages in schools. Similar public issues in a number of other states (Madhya Pradesh and Goa) crupted at about the same time.

ot surprisingly, the Chief Minister's angrezi hatao campaign began to run aground quickly after it was launched. It was foundly denounced in the English press. When Mulayam Singh held a press conference in Madras, he was accompanied by a bilingual translator for Hindi and Tamil. He requested that no English be used by the press pool, implying that every reporter would have to rely on his capacity in the regional language. The translator was quickly flummoxed, however, when questions in Kannada. Malayalam, Bengali and even Kashmiri were fired from the floor. Even more disappointing was the response received from the Chief Minister of Kerala soon afterward when Mulayam Singh Yadav sent him a letter in Hindi. This was returned, with Chief Minister Nayanar's comments on his UP colleague's parochialism

('A Salutary Lesson', Times of India, 23 October 1990).

Mulayam Singh's campaign need not be seen merely as uninformed political grandstanding, for his complaint against English does echo public concerns for equity of opportunity. One argument against official and administrative English usage is that it hampers regional languages as well as the people using them. As one commentator put it, 'It is the dominance of English in our administration which has deterred the growth of these languages, and placed at a disadvantage aspirants from socially and economically backward classes trying to enter and prosper in government service' ('Calcutta Diary', Economic and Political Weekly, 29 September 1990).

Proponents of the above view generally level a companion charge that the Indian education system is somehow responsible for perpetuating the dominance of English language. Thus, Mulayam Singh's anti-English drive also targeted the so-called public schools of Uttar Pradesh, which he felt should no longer offer English-medium education. This call led to a series of attacks on schools run by Christian organizations in Uttar Pradesh, in a resurgence of the anti-English feeling, tinged with Hindu chauvinism, that has periodically assailed Indian education since Independence. Yet in spite of repeated clarion calls for its dismissal, English education is still widely perceived as desirable, and has been extended in quantity (if not in quality, according to many observers) in the last 40 years.

According to national statistics, there are 185 million people enrolled in educational institutions in India, 40 million of whom receive Englishmedium instruction. While state government-run primary and secondary schools, as well as many colleges, use regional language media, at higher levels English is pervasive: the 137 medical colleges, the five Indian Institute of Technology campuses, 8 central universities, 17 of 22 agricultural universities and 11 of 20 deemed universities, all teach in English (see also Krishnamurti, The Regional Language, p. 20). Since

education is the prerogative of the states, there is no uniform policy governing the commencement, number of years etcetera of English instruction in schools, but English has been shown to be the most widespread second language at every educational level in all states.

niversity educators began in 1984 to debate the desirability of gradual replacement of English by Indian languages, the so-called 'mother-tongue' policy of education favoured since the 1930s by the Congress Party in its power-sharing relations in pre-independence states. If we look closely, however, it is apparent that the policy is a direct descendant of a 'diffusionist' model of education originating in colonial times. The model held that vernacular languages were necessary to give less-advantaged classes access to the fruits of Western learning and literature to be made available through translation, and through the offices of vernacular-language teachers who also knew English. Charles Wood, President of the Board of Control of the East India Company, wrote to the British Crown in 1854 that additional expenditure on the vernaculars was justified, as these would be 'gradually enriched by translation of European books or by the original compositions of men whose minds have been imbued with the spirit of European advancement' (quoted by Annamalai, English in India, p. 4).

It is clear that Wood's memorandum has practical force even today, as English is still felt to be 'the language of science and secular knowledge...the language of progress and the language of power' (tbid., p.5). The Radhakrishnan Commission report on university education of 1950-51 states frankly that the 'English language has been one of the potent factors in the development of unity in the country', but at the same time it 'cannot continue to occupy the place of state language as in the past'. Yet the report seems ultimately to accept the diffusionist model, recommending only gradual change of medium at the university level, and that English continue to be studied at secondary and tertiary levels 'in order that we may keep in touch with the stream of ever-growing knowledge' (cited in Kachru 1983:91).

The historical role of English in India's education policy is an enormous subject to which I cannot do justice here; I would only point out that it leads to important insights about why English is symbolically rejected and yet pragmatically accepted in Indian society. One of the most telling of these insights is that in spite of enormous investment and public commitment to the doctrines of language policy and planning, India today finds that the position of English in the country is profoundly unplanned, and runs counter to nearly all policy.

We can see that colonial influence laid the foundation for much of the authority English still holds in defining what it means to be welleducated. According to one study of patterns in higher education in 2500 colleges (Rudolph and Rudolph 1972), there is striking difference between those regions where colonial influence on education penetrated earliest, and the Hindi 'heartland' where it penetrated less deeply. In the former regions, nearly 70% of colleges have English-medium instruction, while 70% use the regional language. In the heartland states corresponding figures are 15% and 35% (p.57). The study suggests that 'the dice of educational history have been cumulatively loaded in the direction of the original throw' (p. 54).

A compelling treatment of the roots of this situation is found in Gauri Viswanathan's work on the evolution of the teaching of English literature in British India. Through her analysis we see the phases of justification of English education in terms of a succession of concepts of language authority. Starting with the Charter Act of 1813, England officially recognized a responsibility for the education of its native subjects, in response to arguments that Indian society needed protection and strengthening against the harmful social consequences of conquest under the East India Company (Viswanathan 1990:27). Two decades later this justification was reinterpreted in order to legitimize Anglicist convictions that Englishmedium education, rather than schooling in the indigenous philosophy and literature of the subcontinent (in line with Orientalist scholastic effort by the British), was required to elevate the intellectual and moral qualities of Indian subjects.

The debate beween Anglicists and Orientalists reveals a set of contradictions regarding the state's involvement in education. First, England's desire to convey modern knowledge and values conflicted with its commitment to avoid imposition of the Christian religion, for it seemed impossible to convey the fruits of Western learning without upsetting the applecart of Hindu and Muslim 'error'. Second, the argument that English education would alienate the native intelligentsia from its civilizational roots was countered by the early demands of high-caste Bengalis for English-medium education, which seemed an attractive route to social and economic advancement for their children. Third, the promotion of English learning as a civilizing tool was undermined by the widespread authority of Sanskrit and Arabic as the languages of power and learning.

Viswanathan shows how Anglicist belief prevailed with the 1835 English Education Act, giving rise to an English literature curriculum in India (long before its appearance in Britain itself) as a tool for bypassing the contradictions noted above. The Act stipulated that English would be the medium of Indian education, and ended all funding for English language training in Sanskrit colleges or madrassas. Henceforth the authority of English learning was completely vested in English-medium, secular institutions, in line with views of those like Macaulay who believed that Oriental learning had been weighed in the balance and found wanting. The attendant dec-line in prestige of 'Oriental' learn-ing and institutions, and in the authority of Sanskrit pandits and Muslim maulvis and their languages, was viewed as the inevitable outcome of the 'fallacious content of Oriental learning' (ibid.:42).

While in the first half of the 19th century English literary study was

justified mainly on religious and moral grounds, in the post-Mutiny era English studies were increasingly defined in utilitarian terms. Indian subjects were to be provided with education that equipped them to play useful social roles without challenging the basic stratification of society. Moralistic humanism gave way to 'a pedagogy of worldly knowledge geared to the various occupations of life' (p. 145). According to this 'filtration theory', the benefits of English learning would be diffused to the mass of society through the agency of the small proportion who could be provided with thoroughly English education. When the assumptions of this theory were paired with disproportionately heavy investment in higher education (i.e., in English rather than vernacular-medium instruction) to ensure a supply of adequately-trained bureaucrats for English government service, the result was 'a stratifled society in which boundaries between the select few educated in English and the masses had grown so sharp as to thwart the percolation of European ideas down to the latter in any form, even through translations' (p. 151).

While the authority of English in the later 19th century was recast from the realm of religious morality to the practical and scientific, the ostensible 'social benefits' of utilitarian policy did not undermine the power of traditional caste affiliations, however distastefully the caste system may have been regarded. Government schools recruited overwhelmingly from upper castes, who were not comfortable in mixed classrooms, which meant that most students from lower social strata were found in missionary schools. As Viswanathan points out, 'The presence of two separate institutions. the government and the missionary schools, tended to reinforce caste distinctions and gave the impression that there were two castes in education . . .' (p. 152).

At this point, the historical view of English intentions and educational manifestations shades into a picture of social alignments that are absolutely contemporary. For many Indians today feel that a two-tier

system of education exists, with government vernacular schools having a lower prestige value than private English-medium schools charging much higher fees. It is perceived that the English schools, which although private can receive government grants-in-aid, serve to protect the interests of the mainly urban, English-speaking elite against the competing claims of so-called 'disadvantaged groups', whether these are defined on the basis of caste, economic, or rural characteristics.

Nonetheless, in recent decades, the Indian public seems to have retreated further from the notion of 'eventual replacement' of English in the educational system, with 'concurrent continuation' as the de facto practice. Private English-medium schools, once primarily found in cities, have a spreading presence in towns and villages; they are attractive to affluent as well as slumdwelling parents; and the English kindergarten' has become pervasive (Maloney 1990:7). Krishnamurti finds that 'instead of becoming an advantage, the regional language medium in almost all cases, became a handicap to those who had opted for it', and notes that 'inadequately prepared teachers' are a characteristic of the English-medium primary school system (The Regional Language, p. 19).

Even public figures who loudly reject English as an instrument of oppression continue to send their children to English-medium schools, acknowledging in private that this is an instrument of personal advancement. Mulayam Singh Yadav's son attends an English-medium military school, and one survey indicated that 76% of India's central and state parliamentarians had children in similar institutions (Sunday Observer, 6 May 1990). When there is a choice in education systems, Indian parents of many castes and classes clearly prefer the English school.

In social science terminology, there is an 'occupational opportunity structure' in India that reinforces the authority of English in defining desirable educational goals (Rudolph and Rudolph 1972:56). As long as most higher-echelon civil

service jobs and higher-paying private sector employment opportunities demand the ability to use English, the language will continue to be seen as an instrumental good by individuals. In contrast with the immediate post-Independence period, when government and educational institutions may have been perceived as sources of the authority of English, today it is corporate business, science and technology that also play this role. From the national level, it is progress, seen in terms of economic development and techno-managerial achievement, that define English as having an enabling authority for the country as a whole.

Uf course, since the time of Independence, an English-using elite has represented the 'national perspective', and defined the 'national interest' using English terms such as modernization, secularism, and socialism. It is therefore easy to charge this elite with being a self-perpetuating interest group setting the national agenda in terms which it alone could control. Yet the decades of Independence have also witnessed radical changes in the political and social alignments backing the 'Nehruvian consensus' on national goals. In a thoughtful presentation, D L Sheth (1990) argues that a 'vernacular elite has come to the fore in state and regional politics, and is now wrestling with a pan-Indian elite for national power. The vernacular elite has emerged from intermediate caste groupings that have developed local power bases; while its members may use English as a second language, their major cultural identification is formed by regional languages.

For Sheth, the pan-Indian elite is made up of high-caste groups who lost power in the regional struggles, urban-oriented castes who have gained access to English education since Independence, as well as the older colonial elite. English acts as a 'binding force' for this newly constituted group, which has lost its earlier base within regional culture and politics (ibid., p. 18). Many of this elite are urban-based people who do not operate as easily in a regional language, unlike their forebears who often wrote in, say, Bengali or

Marathi. Many of their children obtain higher education abroad, and they find it easy to identify with the 'global metropolitan world' (p. 15).

It is necessary here to call attention to the much-remarked Indian middle class, some of which overlaps with the elite in use of and identification through English. These English speakers are the audience addressed in glossy magazines whose columns provide eclectic instruction in international technical jargon and racy idiom, as in the 'Mind Your Language' quiz where readers are exhorted to choose the right meanings of terms like parallel pricing, pink-collar worker, shotgun marriage, and dysrhythmia (Illustrated Weekly of India, 1-2 December 1990). A large, thriving communications and advertising industry channels information to this audience in a growing number of media. Private video newsmagazines appearing in the last two years such as Newstrack and Business Plus are finding a fruitful market among English users who are frustrated with state-controlled broadcasting; media observers are now predicting an onslaught of satellite television through cable networks like CNN and Asiasat. The linguistic outcome of this trend in Indian culture will be a further expansion of globalized English.

The contemporary English-speaking, metropolitan, modernist and consumer-oriented culture is thus another frame through which language authority can be viewed in India. There is a qualitative difference between the transnational acculturation through English, and the colonial experience of identification with 'non-native' culture. The pre-Independence elite cultivated English as a second language skilfully using their bilingual facility to communicate and create a national vision at the regional level. A large number of today's metropolitan elite uses English as an adjunct first language. It is an Indian language through which an entire life-world is constituted. Even urban children with a regional mother tongue may have only an English-medium education, so that 'For many elite Indians, Indian English (IE) is the language they know best, but not the one

they learned first...One can even argue that their native competence (as opposed to native language) spans two or more language systems with clearly assigned social roles' (Mohan 1986:44).

It would be a mistake, however, to characterize contemporary English as monolithic. It is made up of many speech genres, including the media-disseminated international news argot, as well as styles, syntax and pronunciation generated through long interaction with regional languages. The accents and idioms of Punjabi, Tamilian or Bengali English encode familiar ethnic identities among English-speaking Indians. Some styles confer prestige on the speaker as being sophisticated, 'convent-educated', while others are stigmatized as 'uneducated' or 'mofussil'. The distinctions are sharp and keenly felt, especially since they parallel the divide between speakers who are the product of Englishmedium education, and those who are not. The social differences reinforce the public's conviction that English-language training in regional-medium schools is of poor quality, and that only English-medium schools convey the prestige and spoken styles needed for social and economic success.

We are faced, then, with a situation where an increasingly homogeneous English style is pushed by the marketplace, devaluing a previous ambilingual usage of English and mother-tongue, or the multi-lingual terrian skilfully traversed by untaught urban workers, migrants, or rural groups such as tribals. Both protection of the dual educational system and implacable media opposition to the linguistic populism of a Mulayam Singh Yadav signal for most Indians that 'mere proficiency in the mother-tongue or the legislated national language will not open the doors to opportunity or advancement (Thapar 1986: 12).

For the most part, the English-reading 3% of India's population is slow to shift the terms of the language debate from the pedagogical or developmental realms to the question of its own present comprehensive authority over national discourse. As Annamalai wryly points

out, 'It is ironical that before independence it was believed that there could be no economic prosperity or development with the English people in power, and after Independence the belief is that there could be no economic prosperity and development without the English language in power' (English in India, p. 22).

IV Larginalization of regional languages, literatures and life-worlds is a serious charge laid at the door of pan-Indian English. It is 'a language that actively competes with the indigenous first language, traumatising all Indian languages into a subservient half-life' (Mohan 1986: 44). English predominance has also been said to be limiting India's 'civilizational creativity', the process whereby indigenous ideas 'come up, adapt, and flourish in a language', because 'relative to their numbers of speakers and historic civilizational achievements, the effect of Indian languages is weak' (Maloney, p. 8). And the weakness of regional languages—indexed by the poor state of educational resources, noticeable lack of professional translators, as well as the pervasive authority of English-ultimately slows 'the whole modernization and development effort as a grassroots process' (ibid.).

If we accept that social attitudes about English are one of the major sources of its authority, this explains why government policy and regulation would have small effect in countering current use patterns. This is the unhappy conclusion forced upon one after survey of the impact of various commissions, plans and acts ostensibly designed to limit and replace English as an educational or administrative language. Yet there are other responses to the dominant authority of English currently evident that may indicate the directions of language choice in India in the foresecable future.

If there has been a marked coalescence of a pan-Indian elite able to take advantage of English prevalence in science, technology, management and the media, there have also been important transitions underway in regional languages in the post-Independence period. The regional languages have been the vehicle of

spreading education among localized social groups. The restructuring of states along ethnolinguistic lines in the 1950s and early 1960s allowed geography to coalesce with linguistic identity, and enabled the major regional languages to consolidate their cultural base. These languages are evolving in important ways, generating new literatures and serving as the channel for broader political participation. Some see English on the decline as a 'language of cultural hegemony and political domination', leading to greater importance of the states as political and cultural units (Sheth 1990).

he strongest regional language in terms of numerical strength and political clout is of course Hindi, which is the official language of six states and Delhi. If we accept one label for all the dialect variation that shades across this 'Hindi belt', then the language is spoken by about 43% of India's population. It has been pointed out that thanks to increased out-migration from the Hindi belt, and to the spread of Hindi through the electronic media and the Hindi cinema as well as generally through the market process, Hindi is now increasingly used, either as a second or a third language or in a form of a bazaar patois by a large number of people in different parts of the country outside the Hindi belt' (Sheth 1990: 23-24).

We may note that this spread of Hindi usage has not come about because of government flat or the energetic efforts of the Parliament Committee on Official Language Use, but is largely due to the entertainment industry, the video revolution, magazine and newspaper publishing, trade and transport networks, and individual mobility. The national television and radio networks (Doordarshan and AIR) have played a role, to be sure, but the style of official Hindi used by these media is widely criticized as an abstrusely Sanskritized contrivance, not the kind of language which your ordinary listener or viewer either speaks or understands' (Amita 'Mind your Language!', Malik. Indian Express, 3 March 1991). Hindi cinema, advertising and the rapidlyspreading private news videos display more down-to-earth styles.

Does the current dynamic role of Hindi in communications and the marketplace then signal that another kind of national language is in the making, or that Hindi will overtake English in the function of 'link language"? There is considerable evidence to counter this suggestion. The prevailing second-language teaching pattern in schools emphasizes English rather than Hindi. Outside the Hindi belt, English is more frequently reported to be an individual's second language than Hindi (35% to 28%, respectively). Further, public opposition to what is seen as the centre's desire to 'impose' Hindi on all regions of the country is still strong.

The fear of linguistic and cultural domination in regions outside the Hindi belt is not a new phenome-non; massive anti-Hindi agitation was the reason that Nehru abandoned the policy of English replacement. That the issue is still sensitive was illustrated recently in Madras. when the Indian Airlines office began a campaign to use Hindi one day a week. Public protests were immediately scheduled, and the plan was abandoned ('Indian Airlines Takes DMK for a Ride', Times of India, 24 February 1991). Public sentiment against Hindi as a 'hegemonic central government ploy' is easily exploited by regional politicians, whereas English finds its strongest opponents mainly within the Hindi belt.

he reasons for this sensitivity are interesting. We may recall that the regions that eventually became Hindi states were far less penetrated by the colonial education system; colleges modelled on English universities were started in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta in 1857 whereas the University of Allahabad (in today's Uttar Pradesh, then the United Provinces) opened only in 1888. By that year, more than 60,000 candidates had sat for English-medium university entrance exams in Madras alone (Rudolph and Rudolph, p.55-66). The Hindi-speaking states ended the colonial period not only with fewer English educational institutions, but with much lower overall literacy and more restricted primary school enrollment, than non-Hindi regions. It is easy to see why non-Hindi belt regions have historically felt a greater stake in, and experienced greater rewards from, the English educational system.

Yet there are even more deeply rooted and revealing factors behind widespread resistance to Hindi, particularly among English-speaking elites. One factor was referred to above: the programmatic use of an 'artificial' Hindi, using great numbers of Sanskritized terms, by the government media. Language planning has run riot as the Scientific and Technical Terms Commission 'has manufactured 300,000 terms with a Sanskrit base for different branches of knowledge and these are avidly used by government agencies and law-makers' (Krishnamurti, Language Standardization, p.686).

he roots of this shuddha ('pure') Hindi go back to the early stirrings of nationalism in the north, when the language 'became a true symbol of the aspirations and self-identity of an emerging regional elite' (Kumar 1990:44). Using Hindi to inspire a more confident, nationalist outlook, this elite gradually managed to sever the language's links with the literary and cultural heritage of Urdu. This process had both a pedagogical and political impetus. On the one hand, Hindustani (Khari-boli), the Hindi-Urdu mix then prevalent, was considered unfit as an educational medium because it was the language of the bazaar and ordinary villagers. On the other hand, in developing the idea of an Indian nation with a glorious heritage waiting to be revived, Urdu was regarded as a 'foreign' intrusion in India's cultural history.

The growth of publishing, spread of vernacular education, and appearance of Hindu reformist movements in the north (through religious-based organizations such as the RSS and Arya Samaj) combined to pursue a Sanskritized Hindi that was purged of Arabic and Persian elements. Hindi literature as taught in schools denied the Hindi-Urdu tradition, projecting a Hindu religio-cultural identity which has shaped educated awareness in the region right from the 1920s (Kumar 1990: 1249). Gandhi's pleas before Partition to

make Hindustani the national language were unsuccessful, with opponents claiming Hindustani was not really Indian, and 'the great dream of the UP literati to provide the future nation with an indigenous lingua franca thus got overlaid with an association between religious revivalism and language' (ibid.: 1253).

Given this situation, which I have described only in outline, and on which Krishna Kumar has contributed excellent studies, the perception of Hindi as a language carrying a religio-cultural 'hidden agenda' appears to have some basis. In the early post-Independence days, Kumar writes, the national elite put all its eggs in the basket of English, creating the patterns of education, governance and social values I have already described. They were not interested in developing Hindi to express the new nationhood: 'Hindi was a deity to which they (Westernized elites) had to pay homage as it symbolized India's free status in the community of nations, but for whom they had little affection or use at a personal or collective level' (Kumar 1991:45).

**B**ecause of national elite indifference to the substance of the growth of Hindi, it was possible for revivalist interests to gain control of the large government machinery propagating the 'official language'. This machinery included the governmentrun media, education in the Hindi belt, and all institutions and programmes for developing Hindi. Kumar suggests that contemporary events such as the nationwide screening of the television serial Ramayana, as well as Rajiv Gandhi's 1989 conciliation with Hindu fundamentalists at Ayodhya, can be linked to a tragic bargain between Englishspeaking elites and Hindu revivalists.

This argument would seem to be further confirmed by the recent controversy over the broadcast of a dramatic serial on Tipu Sultan, the 18th-century south Indian Muslim ruler, which was strongly opposed by the revivalist religio-cultural groups. In Hindi literature, some critics have noted that works with sympathetic or non-stereotypic Muslim characters are rare. Two recent

novels, Tamas by Bhisham Sahni, and Shahar Mein Curfew by Vibhuti Narain Rai, have been attacked by the Viswa Hindu Parishad: Tamas for its evocation of the sufferings surrounding Partition, and Curfew (written by a senior superintendent of police) for describing the communal riots in Allahabad in 1980. Interestingly, both works sparked public controversy not so much when they appeared in print, but when their film versions were planned. The VHP Secretary-General responded to plans to film Curfew by threatening to burn any movie theatres showing it ('Curfew "Tolls the Knell"; Times of India, 21 April 1991). And Tamas found popularity as a book only after its excellent film version appeared on national television.

These events suggest that Hindi bears substantial authority in shaping and communicating popular awareness through film and the electronic media. At the time of the Ram Janmabhoomi crisis in 1990, Hindu solidarity as well as outbreaks of terrible communal violence were spurred as 'underground' cassettes and videos circulated rapidly. These featured anti-Muslim speeches and effective visuals of Hindu protests at the disputed mosque site in Ayodhya.

The informal electronic media's role in spreading ugly propaganda during the Ayodhya crisis is disturbing. Yet Hindi's capacity to move along with technological changes in the production and consumption of information galvanizes new potency within, and greater impact as a link language ouside the Hindi belt. In a paper on linguistic modernization, E. Annamalai wonders whether a language's orientation toward increased technological diversity might be related to 'modern' societal goals such as free access to information by people of all social backgrounds, and a reduction of vested control of language resources (Modernization of Language, pp. 5-6, 9-10).

In some regions of India, these notions are being actively tested in unique socio-political contexts. In the troubled Punjab, language has become a special province over which insurgent control is asserted. All government work and university

education is to be done in Punjabi, all public signs, nameplates, and so forth are to appear in Gurmukhi script. A strict code of conduct for journalists has decreed that the word 'terrorist' shall be replaced by 'militant', along with other restrictions on journalistic language. To enforce its ban on Hindi news broadcasting in the province, the Panthic Committee had the station director of All India Radio in Chandigarh killed. The mainstream press is agonized by these developments, but by and large has complied. In the Punjab, cultural and political separatism are sought to be compelled by the harshest means, and no one seems surprised that language and its written form have become a battleground. Control of printed language and speech, dress, food, religion and governance are all vested in Panthic authority.

Another case of challenge to the authority of the nation's official languages is found in Tamil Nadu. The South Indian opposition to Hindi following Independence found its strongest forms here, where massive public demonstrations and strikes led to violence. State politics have ever since been dominated by groups who have successfully developed messages of linguistic and cultural autonomy.

In some ways the development of Tamil prose resembles the colonial period story of Hindi: in an effort to revive pride in a lost 'golden age' of indigenous society, a linguistic style or lexicon from the revered written tradition was superimposed on the living language. In Tamil Nadu, political trends converged with linguistic revivalism to scapegoat not the Mughal 'foreigner', but the Aryan Brahmin and his Sanskrit. Thus anti-Hindi sentiment is an extension of antipathy to perceived Aryan cultural domination. One of the fiercest linguistic battles in modern Indian history concerns loan-words in Tamil from English, Urdu, and particularly Sanskrit, despised by language purists (Baker 1981:15).

In the history of English education in India, the Tamil people were among the most successful. The province had the country's highest literacy rate in the 1880s; nearly a hundred years later, the Indian Administrative Service, which recruits on a national basis, still had a disproportionately high percentage of Tamil officers—24% between 1951 and 1961 (Rudolph and Rudolph 1982:56). Primary-level education, led in part by missionary activity, was extended broadly in Tamil Nadu long before Independence.

he modern language dilemma faced by Tamils is based both on powerful loyalty to the regional language as well as high educational aspirations. The regional language, in turn, reveals a diglossic dilemma where an enormous gap prevails between an elevated written style based on ancient poetic conventions, and the standard speech styles spread among the population (Krishnamurti, Language Standardization, p. 682). As some Tamil specialists have pointed out, the political stakes even before Independence became too high to permit a creative modern style to evolve freely, and today 'even linguists... are afraid of advocating a modern dialect form for formal written communication —for fear of reprisal from the party in power' (Krishnamurti, ibid.). Yet a general deline in English abilities paralleling the spread of education has also produced an elite 'who are not competent in English in spite of widespread preference for it, and who would like to have in Tamil matters of intellectual interest...' (Annamalai, Modernization of Tamil, p. 12).

The question of how to dovetail the capacities of the language with the social objectives of broad participation by the greatest number of people, is what some Tamil intellectuals are now trying to answer. One recent effort involves developing highly innovative lexicographic tools using computer methodologies, being carried out by a group called Mozhi in Madras. The group has recently published the first dictionary of written Tamil based on synchronic features of a corpus of published texts, newspapers, magazines, government publications and transcriptions of radio and television broadcasts. The dictionary database has been further developed to produce language resources and educational materials

for schools, professions, publishing and media, and so forth.

Tamil—and the same could be said for other regional languages—is being shaped by an increasingly complex set of user needs and media. In terms of its internal language debate, the legitimate grounds of its authority will shift from what is 'pure' or 'classical' to what is communicative and accessible.

The crucial feature of India's linguistic landscape today is the ascendancy of the major regional languages emerging since Independence. In media, we find the enormous publishing empire of India Today continually increasing its regional language editions; in advertising, the cutting edge is occupied by firms moving into the regional language marketplace. It is clear that increased literacy will strengthen and standardize regional languages, displacing English to a certain extent, and further weakening minor languages scattered amidst standard regional varieties. As technologies spread, regional languages will increasingly be documented and disseminated using computer technologies: audiovisual media will adopt regional languages to reach vast audiences.

What occurs during the era of regional language emergence will set future patterns for the relationships between language and information access on the one hand, and between knowledge and authority, on the other. As D L Sheth points out, elite language dominance was countered both by Buddhism and the Bhakti movements earlier in Indian history; in this view, democratization and the vernaculars are mutually strengthening.

As this process unfolds, English will not be discarded, but may come to occupy functional roles in a less socially divisive manner. The quality of education will be considered more important than its medium, which could be bi- or multilingual. The ability to use regional languages will carry more prestige, and the widespread Indian capacity to operate multilingually will be mined as a precious national resource. The 'natural growth process' in language will come to be valued more highly than

politicians symbolic manipulation. In time, the Great Language Debate will subside in the recognition that India does not need to decide whether Hindi or English should be its link language; enforced language 'choice' can then be evaluated as just one model that happened to be favoured by development and modernization theory, or as just one chapter in the history of national discourse.

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# Educating Jude

ALOK RAI

IN his once-much-maligned and now-much-unread novel Jude the Obscure (1895), Thomas Hardy's protagonist, a stonemason, yearns to go to Oxford—'Christminster' in the novel. In a memorable scene, Hardy shows us the young Jude, then an apprentice, lying on a hill somewhere to the west of Oxford, waiting for one of those sudden moments of lucidity in which the intervening haze lifts, and the famous domes and dreaming spires of the ancient university appear, if only for an instant, shimmering in the distance. It is a glowing vision, radiant with the young stonemason's naive imputation of scholarship, learning, knowledge, wisdom.

Years later Jude, a passionate and formidable autodidact, actually gets to Christminster—albeit only as a stonemason with dust in the creases of his clothes. He lives in the neighbourhood known as Jericho-Beersheba in the novel, then poor, now gentrified. Somewhat to his own alarm, he undergoes an experience similar to the one that rocked Fanon's existential foundations: like the black man in the land of the blanken, Jude too can scarcely be seen by the chattering undergraduates and the pompous dons. '...in passing him they did not even see him, or hear him, rather saw through him as through a pane of glass...'

When, despite all the weight that privilege and unfair circumstance have laid on him, he finally picks up the courage to apply to the Master of Biblioll, he is turned down with a frigid and arrogant finality: 'Judg-

ing from your description of yourself as a working man, I venture to think that you will have a much better chance of success in life by remaining in your own sphere.... Mortified, stung by the casual inhumanity of the guardians of humanistic learning, the young workman stalks through the night streets of Christminster and scrawls these angry words from Job on the gates of Biblioll: 'I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you....' (Right at the end, dying, he draws on Job again, and curses the day that he was born.)

It is a powerful moment. However, while one may see in Hardy's narrative design the constricting effect of the realities of Victorian class society, one may also see that Hardy thus bypasses the pedagogical problem(s) that would have arisen if Jude were actually to get into Biblioll College, Christminster. (The working-class influx was to bring about major changes in British education in the first half of this century.)

Suppose Jude were actually to invade the halls of privilege with his dusty clothes and his Dorset accent, with the heavy weight of his direct experience of Victorian realities? After what fashion would the Master of Biblioll and his fellows, living off the fat of the foundations—in what manner would they dare to educate Jude? What combination of 'sweetness and light', what confection derived from the traditional resources of that civilization—whose underside, as Jude also knows, is

barbarism—would they dare to ladle out to him, and not merit an emetic rejection? Jude Fawley rubbing shoulders with the vain and naive (and, be it said, ignorant) brats of the landed aristocracy and the rural gentry in the 19th century Oxfordhowever unlikely such a picture may be in Hardy's novel, it goes to the heart of the pedagogical problem in India today. We confront these Judes in our classrooms every day, and now that the colonial mystique, as also the hope of social mobility, has begun to wear thin, I fear that we are in for a rough night...

I he putative embarrassment of Christminster stems, of course, from the fact that the humanities have traditionally been associated with privilege—i.e. with the consolidation and propagation of that knowledge which was deemed appropriate for free' men in a society in which, by implication, most people were 'unfree'. The humanities were emphatically not for those who were saddled with compulsions that either blocked their access to education altogether, or forced them in more mundane, utilitarian directions. They were a preserve of the culture of the ruling class. In fact, the humanities were what the ruling class 'did' while discreetly enabling the status quo to maintain itselfa privileged domain to which birth and connections gave one access. This is the face that Jude sees as, excluded, he looks longingly towards the spires of Christminster.

Like the intruders in Bunuel's Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, the sudden entry of Jude and his ilk does tend rather to disturb the party—and it is possible to see that the reluctant emergence of the English academy from the complacency of the Arnold-Leavis model of literary studies has been prompted, at least in part, by the presence, in the student body, of students who stood, 'naturally' outside the canonical consensus. Raymond Williams has written eloquently about his isolation and his feeling of awkward marginality in post-war Cambridge. It is only fair to assume that the embarrassment was mutual. Thus, the McCabe controversy of 10 years ago, in which the diehards put up another 'last stand' in support of all that's worth saving in 'our' civilization, was merely one more episode in a still unfinished story.

There is, I should hastily confess, some shorthand here. In actual fact, the respective stories of the classical humanities—literae humaniores—and of 'English' are, at least in England, significantly different both from each other and also from those of their respective incarnations in a colony like India. When first introduced, English was after all, only a sort of poor man's classics course, suitable for women, workers and dusky natives.

However, as we move from the metropolis to the colony, and then to the 'post-colony', we notice certain crucial differences. Thus, in respect of the humanities as a whole, one would have to be hopelessly romantic-or, better, blind-to imagine that the dominance of our ruling class is mediated through anything indicating even a passing familiarity with the culture of the humanities. Thus, it is clear that science and even more, technology, provide the founding ideology of our elite. On the other hand, English is definitely correlated with social consequence.

Indeed, it is a mistake to think of the colonial university as a 'Christminster'. It was, inevitably, a mock-Christminster, set up by administrative fiat to pacify the native elites, who were notionally less 'unfree' than the majority of their compatriots. It is ironical to reflect that the battle between the Orientalists and the Anglicists in early 19th century Calcutta was eventually decided in favour of the latter on the grounds that English would afford access to modern and useful knowledge, to the wherewithal with which to engage with present reality.

The humanities were a large part of the colonial educational package—but they were inevitably burdened with the crucial disability that they were not free to engage with Indian reality, emphatically not free to cognize the iniquitous and paradoxical condition of their possibility. To put it bluntly, they were called upon to embody the knowledge appropriate for 'free'

men in a country that was itself unfree. It is hardly surprising that the humanities in the colonies dwindled into a function that was essentially cosmetic. The consequent burden of triviality is one that crushes us to this day.

Linglish, however, was something of a special case—and the paradoxes of its uniquely tragic destiny in independent India stem from the fact that while it was-and is-unquestionably an index of status. that status flowed from a condition which education and awareness necessarily forced one to recognize as poisoned, as wrong. It was thus inevitable that English education and 'English', the so-called discipline-became an integral part of the colonial dispensation. Necessarily precluded from any living contact with Indian reality, it became instead a sort of embellishment for the aspiring native elite.

In being cut off from any urgencies that sprang from the environment in which it had its being, cut off from the necessary umbilical relationship with that totality of the human situation which colonial censorship had rendered unthinkable, humanistic education was evacuated of any content and motivationand, soon, morale. But English, imbricated in powerful and powerfully inhibiting ways—then and now -with the structure of privilege in this country, was the joker in the pack. Or, perhaps more appropriately, the eunuch in the harem—because, in a suitably emasculated form, it brought access to the halls where privilege cavorts.

But, it is not only that the colonial Christminster is a mockery and a parody, our Jude too is different in important respects. Obviously he and she too—desires to enter the mock-Christminster, but this desire is deeply paradoxical. Because the violence and evident relish with which our Jude and his mates have overrun the place shows that they hate it too-and for entirely comprehensible reasons. It is the most visible and accessible end of the social machine that victimizes them. To put it in other words, the barbarians have come—and in some moods, pace Cavafy—it does seem like a kind of solution. Then reality, and complexity, supervenes.

Lohia's 'Angrezi Hatao' agitation of the early 1960s was one of the classic evasions of this complexity. It was all so simple then: just paint over a few signboards, remove the academic requirement of English language competence at all levels, and the social revolution was at hand. Well, the revolution has happened. La guerre est finie. Universities and colleges are full of students who have little or no knowledge of English, and the devalued English departments are ill-equipped to impart the language education that is, in any case, technically unnecessary. The apparatus and structures of social dominance are, however, still intact. A knowledge of English is still the obligatory badge of education, the necessary though not sufficient condition for certain kinds of social mobility, and the heirs of Lohia are hungry for the certificates of a knowledge that they will never be able to acquire.

L he question of the place of English in our education is an intricate and complex one—an admittedly peculiar sub-set of the more general predicament of the humanities. Thus, access to English is incluctable at the higher levels of education: for a large number of people in the upper reaches, English is not only the most covenient language of international access, it is also, to all intents and purposes, a first language. But, as all students of the Indian educational scene—official commissioners and unofficial researchers alike—have observed, it is also the case that the persistence of English serves to deepen the chasm between the world and the world of education, producing that schizoid condition known as 'the Babu mind'. It is a condition that is marked by guilt and/or a (sense of) deep cultural inauthenticity. Between the word and the world, there falls the shadow of post-colonial bad faith.

English, disjunct from the world, assumes a hideous, ghostly life of its own. In town and country—out in the peopled wildernesses—earnest hacks spend lifetimes battling with phantoms of words, with gobbets of half-remembered phrases, while the great world goes along its way, dis-

cordant and unheeded. English is unarguably a part of the system of dominance by which the ruling elite preserves itself-but still, it is only a part of the story. Language— English in India—because of its everyday availability, is of course a convenient arena for symbolic conflict, much beloved by populist politicians who are too canny to disturb with truly radical action the obscene equilibrium that has smuggled the likes of them into the upper echelons of power... The paradoxes miscegenate but one thing at any rate is clear: the present situation of informally requiring a competence that the system is not equipped to provide is the worst of all possible solutions.

In the interim, however, this side of whatever democratic or merely demotic paradise the future holds for us, it is necessary to recognize the flattening effect of inadequate linguistic competence. In an obvious way, a severely restricted vocabulary sets a crippling limit on what can be thought and said. But it is also the case that this linguistic default is only part of a more general phenomenon of desensitization and brutalization. 'English' is only a tiny corner of the continent of ignorance that the bulk of our students inhabit. The more general problem is that schools—both good and bad -do not inculcate any kind of critical, analytical awareness, any ability to work with ideas, in any language.

L hrough the fog of ignorance, both linguistic and general, only the broad, large shapes can be discerned. Nuance and discrimination, which are the very substance of education, are swallowed up, lost in the enveloping greyness. Was King Lear a good man or a bad man? Who should be arrested for the murder of Duncan, Macbeth or his lady, ask the flat-footed darogas who fill our classrooms, hungry for naive certitudes, eager to lock up suggestive ambiguities and intriguing complexities in the narrow prison-cells of their minds. In hot and dusty countries, students earnestly commit to memory lyric responses to the exuberance of springtimes and the sombre tones of autumns for which they do not-and cannot-have any experiential referents. Robert Graves in Goodbye To All That—and a million others—have all written richly comic accounts of the farce of English teaching in the colonial class-room.

But beyond the farce, there is students' tragedy. The level of the students' material deprivation, the terrifying simplicity of their need—a job, a means to earn a livelihood, no more -is such that it seems almost inhumane to actually expect them to want education—training in nuance and discrimination—rather than just the degrees that they, in the face of all available evidence, expect will get them jobs. Jude has entered Christminster—but he is looking for a job now, and there is a strangely desolate, and desolating, look in his eye. We cannot dare to educate him inthe old way, nor know how to do it in any other. But we cannot afford to ignore him either.

Thus, in 1978, nearly 20% of all graduates were unemployed. Of these unfortunates, nearly 46% were 'Arts' graduates. (The overall mood of the universities may be gauged from the fact that 85% of the total graduates unemployed had come out of the university facilities. The remainder came from various professional institutions.) A decade and a half later—and what a decade and a half it has been!—one can be reasonably certain that the situation is much, much worse.

With what moral authority can one stand between the doomed semiliterate and his degree, demanding that he reads books to which he has no access, expect him to sensitize himself to nuances of feeling and idea that are more remote from his brutalized daily existence than the stars under which he reads by the light of street-lamps? And yet, on the other hand, what is the academic fallout-in the short, medium and longer term-of admitting to higher academic degrees, in pinched, deprived institutions, hundreds of these victims of heartless social process? Day after day, in institution after institution. Christ's miracle of the insufficient bread and wine (or was it loaves and fishes?) is sought to be repeated: desperate educators pretend to dispense education in the absence of even the most basic texts.

It isn't merely that our Jude is hungry for a knowledge that the academy is unable to provide; or that he has (or should have) no use for the vapid simulacra of knowledge that the academy is equipped to dish out. Over and above these mutual embarrassments, our Jude is hungry too—and afraid of being hungry in the future. And the academy has yet to register the weight—the possibly insupportable burden—of this awareness.

Can one do anything with English in independent India? Can English in India shed its colonial legacy of effete and snobbish aestheticism, and develop an identity and range of interest more in keeping with the excitement that the discovery of the incluctable textualization of reality has generated in literature departments internationally? Even more to the point, can English escape from its fatal complicity with an iniquitous social order?

English classes—out here, in this neck of the woods, my patch of dustbowl, so to speak—consist of two broad groups: on the one hand, the urban middle-class girls who, in anticipation of the inevitable marriage, are on the lookout for something like a finishing-school gloss, albeit translated into Indian terms-wheatish complexion, convent-educated, that sort of thing. On the second hand, as someone once said alarmingly, there are the rural lads, innocent of English, miseducated in a hundred mofussil schools, hoping to acquire a degree that will, at best, enable them to produce clones of themselves...

The social chasm that divides the two groups is truly saddening and even appalling, but the fact is that both the groups are equally impervious to anything that might be called education. The social demand that drives both groups is implacable and, in the foreseeable future, inexhaustible. It is also deeply reactionary. It ensures that little children will continue to be tortured in 'English medium' schools, and University English departments will continue to grow. However, this same social context and pattern of

demand also ensures that the English academy is condemned to being cosmetic and trivial, condemned not to enquire into the conditions of its own possibility and continued 'well-being' in independent India. The very bloatedness of the English departments is a sign of their malaise.

Duppose, indeed, that the profession of English in India were really to seek to appropriate—for it cannot recapture—the sense of and concern with the process of cultural argument, with the experiential processing that is the raison d'etre of literature. (Criticism is, on this account, the laying bare of the dynamics of that process.) It may well discover that the English language is the least significant-even awkward, embarrassing, hindering and worse-part of its legacy. If, that is, we are serious about the cognitive and humane potential of the discipline—'English'—we might well be called upon to abandon the English language. For it is unarguably the case that the cultural engagement which alone can provide a justification for the existence of 'English' as a discipline of studies, cannot be carried on, at least in India, in a language that is so deeply implicated in the status quo. Only through following some such strategy can the profession hope to escape from its present demoralized condition.

Come that day, the English academy will really be fit to receive Jude—not because it necessarily has anything to offer him, but because it has finally allowed itself to recognise what was already known to the man who was nicknamed 'the tutor of St Slums'-that 'there is something wrong somewhere in our social formulas...' Of course, we may well . find that our Jude wants nothing more—as the JNU experiment with 'backward preferences' has shownthan to become like those who hold him in thrall. Perhaps he dreams only the civil service dream-like the slave, who dreams not of freedom, but only of holding the whip himself. That will be the final twist of the knife.

Or, as someone said once, kiss me, Judas.

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# Discussion

Language is not merely a means of expressing our 'truths'; it is also an exploration of what Picasso called the 'truth of our lies'. One of the fundamental ways in which a human communication system differs from the systems of other species (bees, vervet monkeys, dolphins), is in its capacity to manipulate the world through the construction of 'fictions'. The most complex versions of such linguistic play are obviously to be found in the imaginative productions of a culture—myths, songs, novels, satires, plays. Our language-games', especially of the literary variety, show us up as we are and, more interestingly, as we imagine we may be.

For this classic Aristotelian reason, awards for 'literary achievement' are equally intriguing for those who see language as a manifestation of social norms. Literary prizes, more than prizes for, let's say, chemistry or mathematics, reveal the ways in which a society evaluates its 'dreamers of dreams'; they subtly reinforce, and very occasionally question, the standards of judgement a culture has evolved in order to maintain its solidarities, its affinities, and its 'truths'.

The conversations which follow are with a writer and a critic, both of whom were recently on the three-member regional panel which judged the Commonwealth Prize for Fiction. Here, Nayantara Sahgal, Meenakshi Mukherjeo discuss with Rukmini Bhaya Nair some of the practices as well as the idealizations which govern our linguistic choices, our authority, at the institutional level. If all use of language is a reaching out, then these discussions are about the limits, as well as the limitlessness, of that reach.

#### NAYANTARA SAGHAL

RBN. Ever since Prison and Chocolate Cake, you've been known as a writer both in India and internationally. You are also in the unique position of both having received awards, i.e. of have been judged, and of having given awards, i.e. of judging other writers. What kind of role does a literary award play in a writer's life? What sort of effect does it have on his psyche? Which award that you yourself have received, has pleased you most?

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NS. Awards are always pleasing, wherever they come from. It is always nice to feel that your work has been recognized, that you have been able to speak to people through your book, that they have understood what you are saying. The award, you might say, is the result of that. So every award I've received has been appreciated by me, in the sense that they've represented different things. The Sinclair Prize was given to Rich Like Us for being a book of political and social significance. Since the very beginning all my novels have been of a political and social nature. These are my primary concerns, and my fiction has always reflected them. So I felt this prize was almost tailormade.

RBN. What about the politics of and institutionalization of such prizes? When a writer gets an award, does this make him/her a creature of the literary establishment, less dependent on a general readership, the public? I remember Salman Rushdie once saying at a lecture in Cambridge that he wasn't recognized at all in England where he wrote Midnight's Children. It was only when he got critical acclaim in America and a prize (the Booker) that the English readers became interested in the book.

NS. I'll have to qualify what I said earlier about prizes being welcomed by writers, which of course they are. But in another sense, I'm not sure they're always a good thing, because they've made literature a very competitive field. I for one feel rather sad about this, because there was a time when literature was one area in which you could range far and wide, with your contemporaries, with people older and younger than yourself, and all of us were the richer by it. And now it has become something of a horserace in the same way that sports are no longer sports, but huge million-dollar prizes for tennis matches and so on. It is in this sense that I think some prizes have tended to commercialize literature, because naturally then it becomes writing for high stakes.

RBN. You've drawn attention to the commercialization of literature, rather than its institutionalization, which is the term I used. In one of his poems Dylan Thomas has said: 'Not for the proud man apart, I write on these spindrift pages/Nor for the towering dead with their nightingales and psalms/ Or the strut and trade of charm on the ivory stages/ But for the lovers, their arms round the griefs of ages/Who pay no praise or wages/Nor heed my craft or act.' So there was the ideal of a writer who was, apparently, writing for an audience which ignored him. May be this image of the writer is not really a substantial one unless you consider this as the moral issue of idealism versus ambition. Would you see it as this? Competitiveness being all about making it, and idealism about doing what you know you must do, regardless?

NS. We, I hope, distinguish beween what we call literature and books which are purely assembly-line books; which get million dollar advances and so on, not because they are literature but simply because

they are going to sell. They are marketable products, and of course there are far too many of those books.

**RBN.** Isn't it possible to be both ambitious and genuine?

NS. Yes, but then your ambition—if you are ambitious—is there to serve your literary purpose, and not a commercial one. You are not then planning a book which will necessarily sell. You are just writing what is in your head, what you have to bring out, and if it sells, that's wonderful and you're very lucky! And if it isn't a great, crashing success, that isn't your primary aim—that's the distinction I am making. So I think primarily a real writer writes because he has something to write, and for no other reason. And nowadays, apart from the commercial angle and all the publishers' hype, promotion and so on, there's also the great overhanging shadow of literary criticism.

#### **RBN.** Which shouldn't be there?

NS. No, because I don't think that's a writer's business. It's a critic's business...and it's becoming difficult to separate the two, because the critics seem to have taken over literature, defining it, deconstructing it.

#### RBN. You mean institutionalizing it?

NS. Yes, they've institutionalized it and made it a citadel of their own. The writer can hardly help but be conscious, sometimes a little too conscious of it, so that I sometimes wonder whether writers working on a novel aren't—perhaps subconsciously—aware of this, and therefore constructing sentences which will, well, fit the bill!

**RBN.** This raises several questions. For instance, can you shut out the world in which you live, the world of critics, commercialization, technology?

NS. I've shut it out in the sense that I have opted out of the latest technology. I don't use a word-processor. Partly because of our circumstances in India, where these things depend upon a regular power supply and so on. But I've opted out for another reason as well. I think that the computer probably induces you to write quite differently too. I was once at a literary conference where there was a Welsh poet who remarked with a sense of great delight and discovery—Do you know, he said, do you know that poetry becomes quite different when one is writing on the computer? My poems have changed since I took to a computer. This made my blood run cold Because I think that one should change in the course of growing, evolving one's writing. One should change, but not because of the computer.

RBN. In our country we have so many oral forms of literature, of poetry, and many people would argue that the technology of writing has pushed out the oral forms, in the same way that now the relatively effi-

cient technological skill of word-processing is pushing out the art of handwriting.

NS. I wouldn't call it the same way. Both the writer writing and the recitation, composition of oral poetry are essentially human processes, as opposed to the intervention of a machine.

RBN. But the machine is only taking down what, as you said, is in your head. It's good for drafts—just as you would scratch out a word on paper, you're blinking it out on a computer screen. There's no change in the process of crafting, re-crafting, of thinking, because you have to have a poem to begin with. The computer doesn't, after all, give you the poem, you give the computer the poem.

NS. I see what you mean, but I think I would maintain what I said. You see, at every stage of technology advance we get one step further away from the human being. Take walking for instance. First we're walking, then we've got onto horseback, after that we're in a car, then we're in an aeroplane where the very speed of flight does things to our whole system, turns it upside-down. Now if you take forty-eight hours to recover from jet-lag at the other end, there are effects on the system of which we may be unaware at the time, but which are incalculable over a period of time. So that the whole business of a seminar at the end of a plane-ride is quite different from the much slower process of getting adjusted when you get to the place via, say, a ship. What I'm saying is that each stage that we move away from nature takes a toll of us, in some important way that we may not immediately grasp the significance of.

#### RBN. Is there any going back, though?

NS. Well, that's the big question—how do you say no to knowledge? As each new discovery comes along, you are more or less bound to take advantage. Every country is bound to go in for computer technology or whatever the latest form of progress, but surely at some stage wisdom must prevail to the extent that we say—yes, this is a very destructive bomb, and I know how to make it, but I'm going to say no to it May be we haven't arrived at that stage of civilization yet, but...

RBN. To get back to this business of prizes: earlier we had favourite authors, now we have best authors. There are so many categories these days—Best First Novel, Best Detective Fiction, Best Novel written before you are twenty-five etcetera. In such cases, would you say that there are durable criteria of 'bestness' that are used, or are the choices of the 'best' highly idiosyncratic, dependent on the interaction of the judges at that moment, which could change?

NS. Yes, I think that we can't really say that every book that wins a prize is going to last, that in fifty years' time it will still be heard of. It may suit a particular taste and period and appeal to the judges there at that time. Another set of judges may

have nominated another book. So there's no saying that a book will have enduring literary value just because it has been selected for a prize. So many excellent books are ignored and so many very good authors are never even published. So judges are not infallible, and they're certainly not God. I think it's all a very fallible, human process in which judges do the best they can with the material they have to select from and honestly apply their standards, of literature to the work before them.

RBN. Do you think writers make the best judges of other writers? Do you think juries should include 'ordinary people'—people with no qualifications?

NS. I don't think so. And if juries are mixed that way, there should always be a writer because that's what it's all about. There should be someone in the critical field, there should be someone who's taught literature, published it... Because literature is after all a discipline, and its rules can't be ignored any more than a historian's...

#### RBN. Craft?

NS. Yes—craft. And that discipline can't really be judged by just any reader. I know that there have been people on juries who are no fiction writers, or critics, or academics, but they have a certain standing in their community, have reached some level of experience in whatever they were doing, so they were considered fit, appropriate, to be judges, However, I do feel strongly that it's good to have a writer on the jury because you need someone who's practised the craft. That's an experience that is unique. Other people, however good they are in their fields, will not have that experience. Just as to judge poetry you do need to have a poet on the jury.

RBN. As you know, there are more powerful prizes and less powerful ones given by countries that have less political or economic clout. So it's as if prizes are ranked, as well as countries. There may well be a distinct hierarchy among literary prizes too, with the Nobel at the top, and then the Booker and so on. How do you estimate the role 'politics' plays in assessing the 'worth' or value of prizes?

NS. Naturally, a major literary prize would be a god-send to a writer in many ways-simply from the point of view of receiving that much money! The other thing is that there are certain prizes which are prestigious in themselves - not because of the country which sponsors them. Prizes which have established a reputation for choosing not so much what suits a particular taste, but for achievements over a long period of years, for the record of a writer. In that sense, the Nobel Prize has sometimes been given to people who have never been heard of by the rest of the world. But then, of course, their names become famous because they're now Nobel Prize winners. The Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz for instance. He was certainly not in the forefront of the world's awareness until he got that prize. I think the Booker, of course, is a prize any writer would covet, although I feel that they've given it a bit too much media-coverage. To the extent that they now have betting on it! In fact, it's even led to an alternative Booker selection, where I think a group of publishers, perhaps—I am not really sure about this point—don't really approve of the Booker shortlist, so they produce one of their own.

RBN. Do you think this business of bringing writers into the world-circuit, as it were, is somewhat easier if you write in English in the first place? Because English is a world language, for whatever historical reasons. Even in our own country, doesn't writing in English give you an immediate audience and reception denied to others?

NS. You certainly reach a larger public all over the world. But that doesn't mean a work by a writer in one of the Indian languages can't be translated into English and reach the same, or a wider public, if it merits publication. Translated work can achieve the same audience if it is published abroad, as some translated works have been.

RBN. But less so in our own country across languages than you would expect.

NS. Yes. But why that is so—I don't know. I think that's a question the Sahitya Akademi could answer, because they deal in translating works from other Indian languages into English, and so on. And they are the ones who select which books should be translated. Then there's Penguin India. They could also perhaps answer a question like this. They have the whole Indian market, they can select manuscripts from any Indian language, and translate them into English. Their editors must know how to go about this—and it would be interesting to know what they'd select. After all, a publishing house like them could presumably put many books on the market, even conceivably the international market, simply through translation.

RBN. Given that there is a demand for books, literary prizes are here to say. How would you suggest they'd be most effective? Big cash prizes in our country might not be that big, so there could be prizes like the Prix Goncourt perhaps, which doesn't give that much money but the citation is prestigious.

NS. What's important of course is the sales—that they help sales. A prize is a good thing, but if your sales are helped thereby, then your books do well even after that particular prize-winning book. Writers who earn a living from writing do need to have good sales.

RBN. And encouragement. Do you think that's a factor, especially for younger writers? Because take Naguib Mahfouz, for instance. It was important for him to get the Nobel, but as he said himself, it didn't radically affect him because he was, after all, an old man.

NS. Yes, that is a tremendous factor. Getting attention that you might not have had, in the case of younger writers. But a prize like the Nobel would not perhaps go to a younger writer because they would judge you on the basis of a lifetime's output. Writing a good book, or even a marvellous book is not the same as a lifetime's output, which over the years has its own message. So it's quite a different thing to have written one brilliant book—you may never write one again—and to have a coherent output.

RBN. So in effect you're saying there are different types of prizes. The Nobel is for a corpus, while the Booker may be given for one book, a brilliant first book...

NS. For one book. They're not judging you on anything else.

RBN. What do you feel about returning or rejecting a big prize? Some years ago, for example, Balachandran Chullikkad, a young Malayalam writer, rejected a Sahitya Akademi prize. And a gesture like this can be seen as a form of political protest...

NS. What reason did he give for returning the prize?

RBN: Well, he said he didn't believe in awards, but I'd like you to unpack the statement. When, under what circumstances, if at all, would you personally reject an award?

NS. I'd certainly reject a prize which I felt came from a fascist regime, or one which practised apartheid. But then no such regime would think of rewarding me. But I think, as far as the Sahitya Akademi awards go, its different. Indian writers have needed encouragement and every Indian language has needed a place in the sun. After centuries of foreign domination, it was all the more important that every Indian language should have the opportunity to grow and be recognised. So I think the Sahitya Akademi did a good thing when it instituted awards in each of the languages. It's not a very big prize monetarily, but I think it would be a pity to do away with it. The Akademi awards have done something for Indian literature. Perhaps a great deal more needs to be done, but a beginning has been made.

RBN. Glitter and glitz are really not associated with Indian prizes. Do you think this is a good thing?

NS. Yes I do, because I'm very suspicious of all that glitters and I'm very unhappy about the way that writing has become such a horse-race. I really think that it was better when it was a profession which had a beauty and dignity of its own and a kind of cooperative rather than competitive atmosphere amongst writers, and less perhaps of the jealousies and rivalries that exist among many organizations today.

RBN. What do you see in the future?

'NS. Well, what can I say, except that I hope that we get back to a more human way of looking at literature, less dominated by prizes, by critical judgements of what a book should be. Writers should not, in the final analysis, be intimidated in any way by theories of criticism.

#### MEENAKSHI MUKHERJEE

MM. On the one hand there is the world of crass commercialism, where everything is oversimplified. On the other there is the arcane world of critical theory. And the writer seems caught between the two...

RBN. This is exactly what Nayantara Sahgal was talking about with a tinge of nostalgia for a simpler past, when the writer was not in thrall to the critic or to the media-people.

MM. Well you can write about the past, but you cannot unfortunately be a writer of the past.

RBN. In a sense, Sahgal was comparing her past to the present times when a writer is much more at the mercy of a world of non-writers.

MM. That can happen in the case of a writer like Nayantara Sahgal, whose frame of reference is not confined to India, but is part of a wider world. In India, the role critics play is not quite so devastating. It's still quite hard to come by scholarly and intelligent book reviews here, whereas there are scores of such reviews being produced every week elsewhere—TLS, The New York Review of Books—where you tend to take reviews very seriously because you know the reviewer has read not just all the books of a particular author, but has read around the area. You are compelled to take such a reviewer seriously.

RBN. Perhaps if one were to think not so much in terms of a particular critic responding to a particular author, but in terms of critical climate, in terms of movements like deconstruction etcetera...

MM. But such a 'critical climate' would still be meaningless in terms of India. Are critics really using new tools of criticism to evaluate books? The critical gaze seldom affects Indian authors unless they are also writing for a foreign audience. But if they are, their books are read there in a different way too, because they are writing about India. They are not read in the same way as Western authors.

RBN. In what ways would you say they are read differently?

MM. For example, I recently read *The World of Nagaraj* by R K Narayan. Now this is not one of the best books by this great writer, yet most of the Western reviewers were....

RBN. Patronizing?

MM. No, not patronizing. But they know that this is a book by the doyen of Indian writers, and we should be properly 'deferential' to the 'Third World' now... That sort of 'hands-off' attitude towards our writing does exist in the West. It could, of course, be exactly the other way around, but there is an attitudinal difference....

RBN. Nayantara Sahgal mentioned that writers often pack their books with metaphorical devices, knowing that this gains critical attention. Whereas an Indian writer has to think in terms of audiences rather than critics....

MM. That's true. In Bangla, unlike Hindi, its hard to find a serious critical review of a book. It's audiences who decide. Hindi may be a little different—there are whole journals devoted to criticism in Hindi. But in general, the matter of critical climate may not be as important for Indian writers, at least in the languages that I know.

RBN. What about the phenomenon of literary prizes? In the near-absence of a 'critical climate' how are these decided? Are they crucial in informing the readership of the importance of a writer?

MM. Yes. The main function of a prize is to make a book popular, saleable, famous. I'll give you an example. Sashi Deshpande has been writing for almost two decades but I always thought she had not got the recognition she deserved. Then Virago published That Long Silence and I thought well, now she will be better known because a foreign publisher has brought out her novel. True enough, Sahitya Akademi, which had ignored her work, gave her a prize in 1991. And while I don't know how the book has sold, at least magazine and newspaper articles, reviews and interviews appeared. To that extent, the prize was useful in getting her work recognized.

RBN. Some time ago you wrote in one of your articles—The Eve of the Beholder—that the choice of language could crucially affect the choice of form by an author. If this is so, then forms in which authors write in our various regional languages should differ quite widely. Would this not make comparison between languages difficult? Would not incommensurability interfere with criteria of judgement, if a body like, say, the Sahitya Akademi, was attempting to choose a 'best book' across languages? What criteria could be developed to allow such a choice, not only across languages, but also perhaps across forms—the novel, the biography, the short story collection—in a given language?

MM. The Sahitya Akademi prizes are so far not for any particular form—the novel, poetry, drama, a book of essays, non-fictional prose, everything is included. In a way, this makes the task of judging very difficult. Also, because I was involved with the Sahitya Akademi selections for five or six years and there have also been one or two occasions when I've been on the jury for prizes outside the country—I can

say that part of the pleasure of adjudicating lies in the long discussions, in trying to convince each other of one's point of view. However, in the case of the Sahitya Akademi, there is no discussion—it is all done by post. The first list is a very extensive one. Letters are sent off to some twenty or thirty people to nominate people who qualify. They make the basic list, which is then sent to the members of the jury. Then the jury members state their preferences in, if I am not mistaken, in a 1, 2, 3 order, and also, of course, give their reasons for this ordering. However, the jury members' choices are made separately -at least this was so at the time that I was associated with the jury. Then one fine morning, they read, along with the general public, in the newspapers, that the prize has been awarded.

RBN. The system is fair, but there is no debate, is that it?

MM. Yes. But returning to the question you raised earlier about disparity between the languages, that discrepancy is still there in one sense. There are very few books published in some of the languages—say Maithili, Dogri. So the competition is uneven. And the question of the relative merit of books across languages is not even raised.

RBN. So if one has to choose one or two books from among fifteen languages, then of course it does make sense to have some kind of criteria to choose across languages.

MM. I think that the Sahitya Akademi being the kind of national organization it is, tries not to insist that one book in a particular language is better than another on all counts.

RBN. That is a morally admirable choice, but in terms of getting a nationwide discussion started on various forms, and kinds of readership....

MM. There's no such debate. Take Indian writing in English. These days there are a lot of books coming out, but in the seventies there was something of a famine. So it was almost as if—if you have written a book in English, sooner or later you are going to get a prize, because nobody else is writing. The prize for English didn't have the same meaning then as the prize for Marathi or Malayalam.

RBN. Well, as soon as you raise the point about 'the same meaning', you are in a sense comparing across languages.

MM. You are comparing. Implicitly, as ordinary readers, we are comparing, but those who have instituted the prize—the institutional aspect of it—they are almost deliberately not going into this kind of comparison. That is not the purpose of the (Sahitya Akademi) prize.

RBN. But the Commonwealth prize, for which you've just been a regional judge, that has its own

problems. Many of us have felt a dissatisfaction with the term 'Commonwealth' as a cultural category. You yourself have expressed this feeling, yet for reasons of convenience or other reasons, we continue to use this rubric and judge prizes under it. Doesn't this lead to a certain contradiction?

MM. It does. I have often said—even in public—that I do not accept the label, but I still accepted membership of the jury for the Commonwealth prize because whatever we call it, for writers from countries other than England who are writing in English, there is now a way in which they can be recognized. Ideologically, one may not agree with the term, but in practice, in order to give these writers visibility, if there is a platform, why should one stay away from it?

RBN. Here, one of the things Nayantra Sahgal said is relevant. There is definitely a hierarchy—a hidden hierarchy—of prizes. In some sense, because of the glamour involved, if a writer got an award from Britain, say, and one from Nigeria or India, the world, and even perhaps the writer himself, would consider the British award much more valuable, because this is how the media views it.

MM. Basically, it's to do with the amount of money involved.

**RBN.** Also the prominence, the political power of the country?

MM. Well, even within a country, there are several prizes. One prize is usually supposed to be the most important. But I don't really know whether the Booker is important for its monetary value or for its tradition of quality.

RBN. To return to the Commonwealth prizes....

MM. Yes, I've just remembered something I should like to say about that. The Commonwealth fiction prize is very new-I think 1991 was only the third year. But the Commonwealth poetry prize has been around a long time. But there was a time when Britain was not included in it. And I think those who protested were 'us'—Indians, and writers from other countries. We said the value of the prize becomes very much less when you say that Britain won't enter for this prize so that the others can have some prominence. Now Britain enters. In the recent selection of the Commonwealth Fiction Prize for example, a large number of the entries were from Britain. It is ironic that from India we only had about three or four entries, from Sri Lanka one, from Pakistan one, from Bangladesh none....

RBN. So again it's a case of Britain dominating?

MM. No, not really. In spite of the imbalance, for the last three years, with India and Britain competing in the same region—there are four regions—India has won the prize for fiction: once Nayantara Sahgal, once Allan Sealy and once Shashi Tharoor. Is this open competition not more valuable? This year (1991) of course, the prize did not go to an Indian. It went to Britain—for the first time!

RBN. Obviously then, this kind of prize has a totally different orientation from the Sahitya Akademi prize.

MM. Yes. Partly because of the extended discussions. The meetings are very long. Sometimes—though not this time—the debates can be very drawn-out and acrimonious. Every issue is thrashed out. And sometimes, when you have these long jury meetings, a not-so-happy thing can happen. People have, let's say, a first choice and a second choice. The first choice is so widely different that everyone settles for the second choice. Nobody is happy, but a compromise is somehow reached.

RBN. So literary prizes like the Sahitya Akademi are more routine, not associated with glamour and glitter: every year there are a number of prizes to be given....

MM. Well, that's true of the Sahitya Akademi prizes, but there are other prizes like the Jnanpith, which are very high-profit. I have not been involved with judging the Jnanpith, so I don't know the details, but I do know that a rough translation is provided to the judges. Of course, an entire five-hundred page novel may not be translated, but at least a synopsis, or the translation of a chapter or two is provided. And then the judges meet and discuss the work.

There is another prize I have had something to do with. The Madhya Pradesh government gives a number of prizes, and one is called Kabir Samman. It is quite a big prize and is given for one book of poems. When I went there, I thought—how can I? Since I know only two Indian languages and if you include English, then three, how can I judge this prize in all these languages?

I thus went in a very cynical frame of mind. But I returned with no sense of cynicism at all. There were nine members on the jury, and I think between them, they could read all the languages necessary. Also, the jury was meeting in Bhopal, and Bhopal's Bharat Bhavan has an archive of poetry being read out in all the different languages, translations being read out and also video films of poets reading their poetry. And so every time one was in doubt, one was taken to Bharat Bhavan to listen to things, to look at things, to get the sound of the poem. Poetry is in a sense easier to judge, because you can get one poem translated—discuss your insights over and over again. Ultimately, the poet who got the prize that year was in a language of which I don't have a 'literary' knowledge—Punjabi—but I had absolutely no doubt that the choice was right. Our hours and hours of discussion, actual translations of the original, tentative as they were, convinced me of that.

RBN. This is fascinating, because it shows that a conducive, congenial environment may, in fact, surmount some of the difficulties of making judgements across languages.

MM. Poetry, of course, is simpler in the sense that I just mentioned. Fiction may not have proved so easy to reach agreements about.

RBN. Nayantara Sahgal believes that on any literary jury, it is critical to have writers. Do you too believe that an all-writers' jury would be the best?

MM. You know, writers are critics also. And any work or any jury is also governed by an element of chance—the specific composition of the jury, for instance. Why I like a particular book has naturally a lot to do with my own background, my own subjectivity, my academic experiences, and so on. I am not apologetic about that because that's that way it has to be. However, if the members of a jury have different backgrounds, they are bound to choose different things. For example, this time for the Commonwealth Prize, we kept thinking that had there been someone from an entirely different background, perhaps things would have been different. Even with the three of us, the third member of the jury felt that a particular book was for academics-it was not a book for the general reader. And so, had there been a general reader amongst us, he or she may not have chosen the book we chose.

RBN. If this is true, then the individuality of each jury member undercuts the assumption/presumption that the jury picks 'the best' writer unambiguously.

MM. There is nothing which is 'the best'. It is always a matter of chance.

RBN. But when you give an award, that is what you are loudly proclaiming—'this is the best novel in 1991' etcetera.

MM. Well, there is a rider here. One is bound by the number of *entries* that come. It's not as though one can consider any or all books published in that year.

RBN. So 'best book' is to be interpreted in a very constrained sense?

MM. I think that with the Sahitya Akademi, the net is so wide that deserving books do get selected, but with the Commonwealth Prize, for instance, the rules are so strict. There are two categories—one is the best book category, the other is the first book category. Now, this time, there was a book in the 'first book' category that was, in my opinion also the best overall. The trouble was, it was not entered for the 'best book' category, so we could not consider it.

RBN. One of the problems Nayantara Sahgal was concerned about was the effect of such prizes on a writer's ego. You remember Rabindranath wrote in

/ Geetanjali: Shokol ahonkar he amar dobao chokher joto. The question of competitiveness, of always looking over one's shoulder at other writers, seems to plague the modern writer after prizes.

MM. Well Rabindran's at Nobel Prize was a very different story.

RBN. Nevertheless, he wrote about 'ahonkar' (pride) as something writers have got to lose before they get the prize. Yet, in a way, these prizes seem to promote 'ahonkar'.

MM. It depends on the writer. Every writer is pleased when a prize is given. I cannot think of a writer who isn't.

RBN. But writers do return prizes.

MM. That is for an ideological, political reasonthe source from which a prize is coming may not be acceptable to the writer. But a prize is recognition. Which writer would not like to be read, liked and admired?

RBN. There's a long tradition of considering the writer as a person apart, someone who can't be bought.

MM. He can't be bought, but a writer being bought, and a writer being pleased that he is liked, are two distinct things. This time, for example, the Sahitya Akademi prize for Bangla was being given to a person who's anti-establishment—Debes Ray for Tista Parer Vrittanta. He came and said: 'Well, I kept on thinking, should I accept this prize? But then what is the establishment?' I gathered that he did not think accepting the prize would change his stand on anything. Another good example is when Nayantara Sahgal's Rich Like Us got the prize. I was a member of the jury, and I was pretty sure that she wouldn't get it, but I put her on top of my list anyway. And she did get the prize, at a time when the Congress was the ruling party. The 'establishment' cannot really read all the books so they have to go by other peoples' recommendations, and those people may not themselves be 'establishment' at all.

RBN. Given that these prizes are here to stay, what would you see as possible improvements?

MM. Sahitya Akademi did something only last year, which was a need felt for a long time. They instituted one award for translation. One award is not adequate, but at least the process has begun. When Adil Jussawalla's Penguin New Writing came out in the seventies, I said I knew this didn't fall within their category—translated material were not considered—but since I had been asked to name the best, I think this is about the best thing that has happened this year. But they were adamant that it did not qualify because it was a translation. Now finally, such books have a place. That I see as an important advance for our literary culture.

#### Oxford in India Readings

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## Books

MASKS OF CONQUEST: Literary Study and British Rule in India by Gauri Viswanathan. Faber and Faber, London, 1990.

WRITTEN by an Indian-born scholar who was formerly at the University of Delhi and is currently at Columbia, this book is in many ways an exemplary piece of research and makes an eminent contribution to the study of the educational policies and practices of the British in India. Yet it leaves me uneasy in certain respects. There seems to be a slight (but to me not trivial) asymmetry between the subtitle presented on the title page and the ground actually covered by the book.

Although the subtitle speaks of 'Literary Study', a generic term, it is not the relationship between British rule and literary study as such or any kind of literary study that Professor Viswanathan is concerned with. The very first sentence of the introductory chapter announces that the book is about 'the institution, practice, and ideology of English studies introduced in India under British colonial rule'. 'English studies' does emerge as a key phrase in the book, but is not, to my mind, given an adequate definition: we are left, more or less, to guess its implications as we go along. Yet as this phrase, currently trendy in many academic circles, was not in vogue when the British introduced their language and books to India, a better establishment of what the author means by it would have been more appropriate.

When I read English literature at Calcutta in the fifties and again at Oxford in the early sixties, or even when I did my doctorate at Oxford in the early seventies, the phrase 'English studies' was not in vogue in either place, the only places where we would come across it being the names of journals, such as the Review of English Studies. One should also remember all those academic centres supposed to be concerned with this or that 'Studies', Indian or Oriental or Latin American, which, on closer inspection, turn out to be not what they seem. More often than not their concerns are restricted rather than occumenical. Thus at Oxford most Indian studies are in the context of economics and history,

most Orientalists deal with the past of the Orient-Latin Americanists deal with politics, economics, history, the sociology of culture etcetera and seldom can these umbrellas accommodate research that is mainly literary.

The second sentence of the opening chapter refers to 'the institutionalization of English', without clarifying whether the language, the literature, or anything else is meant; a little later we are told that the book is in part 'to demonstrate...that the discipline of English (emphasis mine) came into its own in an age of colonialism' and in part 'to argue that no serious account of its growth and development can afford to ignore the imperial mission of educating and civilizing colonial subjects in the literature and thought (emphasis mine) of England, a mission that in the long run served to strengthen Western cultural hegemony in enormously complex ways'. After drawing attention to imperialism's extensive involvement with 'literary culture', the author continues:

The amazingly young history of English literature (emphasis mine) as a subject of study (it is less than a hundred and fifty years old) is frequently noted, but less appreciated is the irony that English literature appeared as a subject in the curriculum of the colonies long before it was institutionalized in the home country. As early as the 1820s, when the classical curriculum still reigned supreme in England despite the strenuous efforts of some concerned critics to loosen its hold, English as the study of culture and not simply the study of language (emphasis mine) had already found a secure place in the British Indian curriculum. The circumstances of its ascendancy are what this book is immediately concerned with...

In the very next paragraph we get the phrase 'English literary education'. I am trying to indicate the extent of wavering in these concepts quickly introduced within a few paragraphs, an uncertainty which I suspect is not unrelated to the way the author has decided to set the boundaries of her chosen field, a point to which I shall return later. We are told that a blurring of the distinction bet-

ween 'English literature' and 'English studies' is a common characteristic of contemporary culture. Quoting the title of an essay by Richard Poirier, 'What Is English Studies, and if You Know What That Is, What is English Literature?', Professor Viswanathan tells us that this distinction 'is useful to bear in mind in connection with British Indian educational history, insofar as it draws attention to literary education, as opposed to literature as a major institutional support system of colonial administration'.

'English as the study of culture and not simply the study of language' and the way that study was used by the British as an instrument of ideological control and cultural domination in India: these turn out to be the main areas investigated by the author. The inquiry is well-conducted, supported by ample references to and citations from primary sources, highlighting the complexity and tangled nature of the processes involved.

Professor Viswanathan outlines the beginnings of formal British involvement in Indian education and the introduction of 'English literary studies' in India through the Charter Act of 1813, then shows how missionary influence helped to forge a special role for 'literary study', 'infusing English studies with cultural and religious meanings'. Subsequently she traces 'the reverse movement' away from this trend and the return 'to secular uses of literature', but this time 'with a strengthened cultural base to give literature a new political authority', with intellectual rather than religious control as the revised goal and literary study coming to be subsumed under historical analysis to fortify British cultural hegemony. She also attempts an analysis of the failure of this policy.

To me the most entertaining nuggets of the story are to do with the missionaries. As the recipient of a 'Duff stipend' during my student days in Calcutta, I have found the account of Alexander Duff's involvement in the story of English in India very instructive. The tragic incident in which Duff, shipwrecked near the Cape, lost all the 800 books he was bringing to India to set up a college, sets the tone. One sole book was washed ashore: the Bible, of course.

The loss of all his books save this one had a profound effect on Duff's attitude toward the sum of human learning. Henceforth he saw the value of modern knowledge only as a means to truth and not an end in itself. 'They are gone,' he wrote, 'and blessed be God, I can say, gone without a murmur. So perish all earthly things: the treasure that is laid up in heaven alone is unassailable.'

Valuable components of the author's analyses are the demonstration of how in controversies such as the secular-vs-religious in education, India provided the ground where struggles implicit in Britain were characteristically carried over and thrashed out in all fury and bitterness, and the failures of both the missionary enterprise to use English as a tool of religious subversion and the secular enterprise to use the same to strengthen allegiance to the empire. The working classes should have been the natural seedbed of missionary work, but in the context of India's own social hierarchy and the internal controls that went with it, the presence of the indigenous learned classes could not be bypassed. In the end the latter were the crucial groups whose responses negotiated the ultimate outcome of the policies of the foreign rulers.

Some of the analyses accidentally illuminate processes that are still at work within British society, itself. Thus the 1854 dispatch issued by Sir Charles Wood meted out 'a fare of useful and practical skills to the lower orders of society' and 'simultaneously promoted the growth of a small but influential intellectual class through scholarships to the proposed universities of Bombay, Culcutta, and Madras', an elite 'targeted for eventual induction into government service':

...while scholarships were increased for those seeking admission to universities, government funds were withdrawn from lower schools and the practice of charging fees introduced. The government abolished stipends in these schools and replaced them with grants in aid, with the added proviso that these grants were to be given only to those schools already charging fees. This condition, which runs contrary to the avowed intention to expand educational opportunities, was justified on the grounds that an entirely gratuitous education was not valued and the practice of charging fees would at once promote more regular attendance and increase the value of education; grants in aid ceased to function as responses to need and were reduced to the status of rewards for complying with government requirements.

The similarities with the policies of the British government in the last decade are all too evident, with the modification that under 'Thatcherism' even the clite classes were squashed flat: certainly it cannot be claimed that by squeezing the schools patronage was increased for the universities!

The style of the book is directed more at the academic reader than at the intelligent lay public and may not always lend itself to easy reading; however, my main regret is the way Professor Viswanathan has chosen to set the boundaries of her investigation. First, a more comparative approach might have yielded even more interesting results. For instance, one would like to know if the 'amazingly young history of English literature as a subject of study' is all that amazing: how does it compare with the situation of the other modern European languages? Did these fare any better in freeing themselves from the dominance of Greek and Latin? Did the colonies of the Portuguese, the Spanish, and the French also help in the 'institutionalization' of their languages?

Can we perceive any general patterns in the relationships between empires and languages? Did the British empire play any role in sealing the fates of the various Celtic languages within the British Isles? Does an empire encourage linguistic developments in the reverse direction as well, such as languages establishing themselves as means of cultural identity in defiance of the dominant language? Did this not happen in India? What about the analogous effects of migration on languages and dialects? Is the 'irony' of English becoming institutionalized in India long before it was institutionalized in its home country any more ironical than the attempt made by the Sylheti community of Britain to institutionalize their dialect in Britain when it had no such position in Bangladesh? Did 'vulnerability' and a 'sense of beleaguerment' play a similar role in both situations? If so, isn't that a more edifying 'lesson of history' than the perception of stereotyped patterns of dominant and dominated?

Secondly, I would argue that Professor Viswanathan has left out of her inquiry the most interesting part of the story: the consequences of the introduction of 'English studies' in India. What did it do to India, to Indian culture, to Indian self-perception? Didn't the Indian intelligentsia's discovery of English literature and thought and of other European literatures and schools of thought through the medium of translations have a profound effect on their thinking in diverse fields and the subsequent development of the modern Indian languages and literatures? Professor Viswanathan maintains that 'it is entirely possible to study the ideology of British education quite independently of an account of how Indians actually received, reacted to, imbibed, manipulated reinterpreted, or resisted the ideological content of British literary education'.

Clearly, such a study was judged to be an adequate project for the author in an American academic context, but is the published book adequate or sufficiently interesting from an Indian viewpoint? Professor Viswanathan elaborates:

How the native actually responds is so removed from the colonizer's representational system, his understanding of the meaning of events, that it enters into the realm of another history of which the latter has no comprehension or even awareness. That history can, and perhaps must, be told separately for its immensely rich and complex quality to be fully revealed.

But why? While not disagreeing with the author's comment that 'to record the Indian response to (British) ideology is no more an act of restoring the native's voice as not recording it is to render him mute', I would nevertheless challenge the assumption that the two histories must be told separately.

If the two touch each other at many points, does the historian not have a responsibility to combine the two elements contrapuntally, at least from time to time? I would say that to do otherwise impoverishes the study, turns the historian into a complete servant of Western academic methodology, and leaves the discourse incomplete—on its own terms. Omission is also a form of statement: the 'native' is not thereby rendered mute, but is left unheard, and a scholar of 'native' origin addressing a Western audience misses the opportunity of making that voice audible.

There is an intriguing paradox here. To give an account of the stupidities, hypocrisies, and arrogant stances of Western colonial powers is an entirely legitimate task, but the seductive nature of that task should not blind us to the fact that unless the stories of the colonized are allocated some space within the same narrative, Western readers will never get to hear them and never perceive the connections: the penny, as the saying goes, will never drop. For this reason I find the sixth chapter of this book—'The Failure of English'—tantalizingly incomplete.

That the study of English literature had merely succeeded in creating a class of 'intellectually hollow' babus, Indian equivalents of Matthew Arnold's philistines, that English education had merely produced a useless 'uprooted elite', 'apostates to their own national tradition and imperfect imitators of the West': is that the whole story? If this is how the British colonial rulers perceived the situation, will Professor Viswanathan also leave it at that, without a footnote, without a postscript, without even a passing reference to the stupendous cultural achievements of the Indian 're-awakening'? Were all the giants of the Indian Renaissance useless babus, and if not, why not?

In analyses of empires and their methods, complicity with the dominant groups is a key concept. When in her concluding chapter, 'Empire and the Western Canon', Professor Viswanathan refers to contemporary 'students and faculty' clamouring 'for a broadening of curriculum to include submerged texts of minority and third world cultures', she reveals at once that she is speaking from the viewpoint of an American academic. She expresses the hope that 'the knowledge that the discipline of English developed in colonial times would appear likely to strengthen their (i.e. of the clamouring Western students and faculty) claims'.

But exactly what does she hope the exercise will achieve? The co-opting of selected bits of the literatures of India into any revised and enlarged 'Western canon', instead of building a truly global canon, would be the ultimate act of complicity with the dominant group and must surely be resisted. And despite the author's warning that 'the history of modern English studies' in India must not be read simplistically 'as uninterrupted narrative', I fear this book will not help the Western reader to understand if and how the educated Indians of today have advanced beyond the stage of puerile babus.

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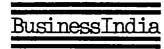
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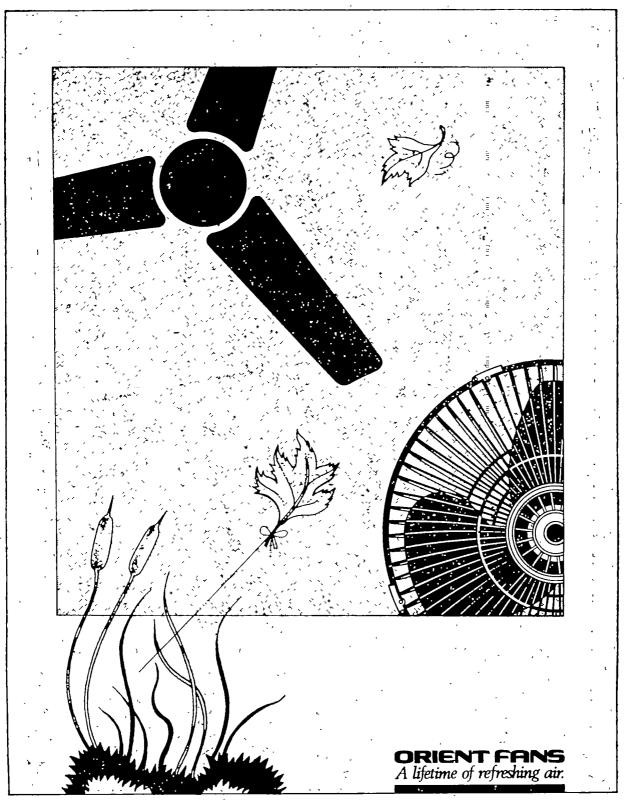
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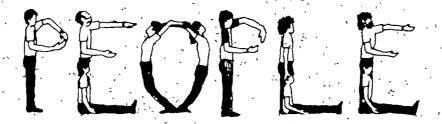
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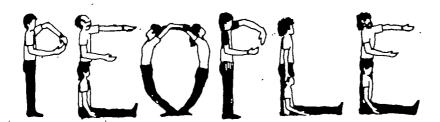
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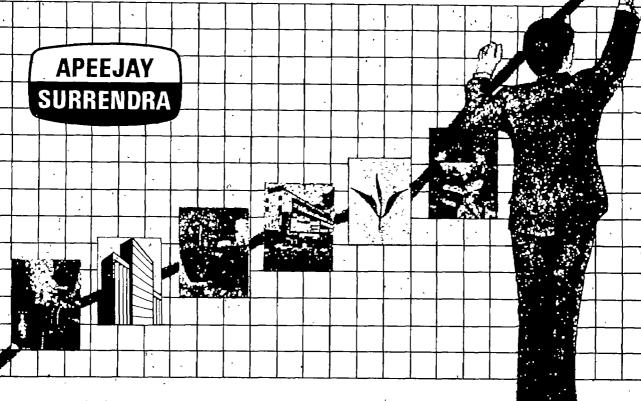
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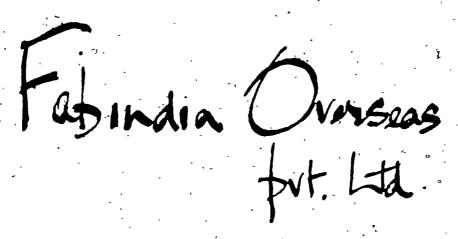
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a symposium on

a troubled state

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## The problem

IN 1739 it appeared to the world, and certainly to India's ruling elite, that all was well with the Mughal Empire. The Marathas were a nuisance but no threat to the throne; the Sikh uprising had been contained. So when Nadir Shah took Kabul the news created hardly a ripple in the frenetic pursuit of wealth and pleasure in Delhi, the world's most sumptuous capital. Kabul was so far away and in any case a remote and barbarous backwater. And when in but a few weeks Nadir Shah stood rattling Delhi's gates the citizenry and government could think of no other defence than to try to buy out the intruder. We all know what happened next. It was the end of India as it had been for hundreds of years and the country reverted rapidly to the congeries of states from which the Mughal Imperium had rescued it.

Today we once more have violence in the northwest. Srinagar is so far away and maybe if we would just forget about it for a little we might wake up one fine morning to find the problem gone! The fact that the suffering Kashmiris are our own countrymen has not moved us to understand their plight or to try to share their sorrows. Worse, our reaction is coloured by whether the sufferers are Hindus or Muslims as if the quantum of human suffering is to be measured by the religion of the sufferer!

Many postmortems have been done on what went wrong and to assign blame to political parties and individuals. These have depended more upon the colour of the analyst's own political persuasion than to any relation to reality. But the question which must concern us today is: 'What is now to be done?' Is Kashmir lost to us? I believe most firmly that it is not, but its retrieval needs a little courage, some thought and above all a will to win the Kashmiri people, all of which have been so woefully lacking hitherto.

To understand the current scenario it will be necessary to go back a little, not to the roots of the problem but to see how mishandling has aggravated the situation. This exercise will suggest the path we must now take. From the time of the fall of the

Farooq Abdullah government, when the number of militants operating in the valley may have been no more than 500 (there is no accurate assessment but this is the maximum figure) the situation deteriorated precipitously till November 1990. This was the period marked by a breakdown of the civil administration, the marginalization of the J&K police—which had earlier effectively led India's fight against subversion in 1965 and 1971 — and the transformation of an expression of disaffection into a full-scale movement for independence embracing in its awesome sweep every section of Kashmiri opinion.

This was also the period in which Kashmir evolved into a complete police state, a condition which has been tempered since but from which the local administration has even now been unable to emancipate itself. The period February to May 1990 also witnessed the mass exodus of young persons to POK to receive training in arms across a perfunctorily patrolled Line of Actual Control (LAC), while the state government imposed curfews in the cities and tied down the security forces where they were needed least. A cursory glance at the dossiers of the vast majority of those now under detention who have confessed to being trained in Pakistan or POK will bear this out.

During this period, then, effective control of the valley passed into the hands of the militants. Their effectiveness, despite small numbers to begin with, arose from their unity of purpose—the leadership of the JKLF was unquestioned with smaller groups following in its wake-and the inspiration provided by the feeling of imminent independence which brought citizens into the streets in deflance of the security forces at a mere call from the insurgents. The repeated shootings and high casualties of unarmed civilians participating in demonstrations, sought to be covered up by a frightened governor who dared not emerge from the confines of the Raj Bhavan, only brought the government into greater contempt and made the fight seem even more a Jihad. Two hundred and seventy-nine people were killed in 1990 in such firing as against 79 in 1991.

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In the space of these few months the safety valves contrived over the last 40-odd years were in sheer panic dismantled and cast to the winds. No consideration was given to those sections of the people who had always been friendly to India, nor indeed to those in government service who were willing to carry on their work even at the risk of being regarded by their own people as quislings. Slowly but surely they too were prodded into the arms of secessionists. The first stone was cast when the state government passed orders that all government servants who had deserted their posts in Kashmir would be paid their salaries at whichever station they had fled to.

Because it was clear that this concession was open only to a particular community, this measure communalized the bureaucracy, led to many more persons descring their posts and huge resentment among Muslim employees who were not eligible for this concession, although in their own eyes and given the pattern of killings up to that time (March 1990), they felt themselves to be in equal danger. From that time the Kashmiri bureaucracy retreated into a sullen cocoon and withdrew cooperation. A series of strikes finally culminated in the 72-day strike of all Kashmiri government employees in September 1990, which marked the total alienation of all sections of Kashmiri society from the Indian state as represented by the state government.

Throughout this period the paramilitary forces, the only working arm of government authority, functioned as in a vacuum, with little and faulty intelligence, since the intelligence gatherers had been either liquidated or intimidated, and with no public contact. The leadership of these forces and the bulk of their personnel was from outside the state. Despite claims of some to being 'old Kashmir hands', in fact they knew next to nothing about the people of the valley, since their association earlier had been only with the fringes of society or the population of the border and they had little experience outside their own camps. None, for example, spoke one word of Kashmiri. The governor, his advisors and most senior officers being from outside Kashmir and with

little or no experience of the Kashmiri people, had worked themselves into far too great a state of fright to attempt any direct contact with the people. The governor, for example, despite being in Srinagar on Republic Day 1990, failed to show up at the annual flag-hoisting and sent an advisor instead.

The end of the employees' strike in November 1990 and the goodwill generated by a negotiated settlement reflected an upswing in the hitherto bleak scenario. It was the culmination of several weeks of effort at restoring a civil and civilian face to the state government. The goodwill so generated led to the governor being openly praised in a widely attended public meeting in Iqbal Park, which included some armed militants who could but watch. There followed a return of government officials to their work and the resumption of development activities, opening opportunities for employment and economic recovery through the restoration of the officials' purchasing power.

Greater interaction between the administration and the public—the general public felt an unusual sympathy for the bureaucracy which was perceived as having suffered for the people—led to expectations of a more responsive administration. The unprecedented snowfall over the new year and the administration's ability to respond, albeit slowly, marked the return of a functioning civil administration after almost a year's dormancy.

Simultaneously, the rift between the pro-Pakistani and pro-independence militant groups began to surface. This was the period when it seems that Pakistan, impressed by the quick and comprehensive success of the pro-independence JKLF, decided to hijack the movement and stepped up assistance to the Hizbul-Mujahideen, its surrogate in the valley. The mushrooming of militant organizations and the growing indiscipline in their now swollen ranks tended to encourage the public to look towards a now not so fearsome government in hopes of redressal of grievances. Huge queues began to form outside offices of senior civil officers. Relatives of those killed in cross-fire or those who had lost their homes began to accept

and indeed approach government for relief which was available but earlier spurned. More than Rs. 13 crores has been spent on relief and rehabilitation upto now. The improved atmosphere enabled government to gradually reduce the hours of day curfew so that by Ramzan (March 1991), it became possible to retain only night curfew (10.00 p.m. to 5.00 a.m.).

The improved atmosphere owed not a little to the improved discipline of the security forces. Incidents of arson in retaliation for militant action which had devastated Handwara town, Kawdara and Noorbagh mohallas of Srinagar and Chini Chowk in Anantnag as well as homes in villages like Magam, were brought to an effective halt. Instead, the government launched relief measures including supply of tin sheets for roofing, timber for construction in addition to cash to help rehabilitate the sufferers. The active cooperation of the sufferers was sought and obtained in identifying the sufferers and the extent of their loss—a process which did lead to squabbles but was the most effective in the unsettled conditions.

A rosy picture? Indeed with hindsight it does appear to be so. For on 8 May 1991, the guns of the CRPF opening up on an unarmed funeral gathering in Khanyar shattered the illusion of improvement and wiped away the gains of many months of careful planning and painstaking effort. A report by the divisional commissioner clearly brought out that this was not a case of crossfiring and that there had been no provocation except verbal abuse to provoke the shooting. Yet the government chose to take the stand that the CRPF had been fired upon 'from all sides', thus irretrievably undermining its credibility in the eyes of the people and even in those of senior officers.

The incidents at Chota Bazar on 11 June 1991, when shopkeepers were murdered by paramilitary forces within their shops and residents dragged from their homes to be killed in the streets, led to the feeling that force remained the basis of government action and the show of revival of civil administration was but window dressing. The state administration had failed to respond to the positive trends in public opinion and conduct by reducing its overdependence on the paramilitary forces. An incident like the Khanyar firing was therefore inevitable. The clumsy attempt at cover-up compounded the damage. Since then there have been ups and downs in the situation, but no real trend towards improvement.

Today, there is a slight improvement in the ground situation arising from the continuing conflict between the pro-Pakistani and pro-independence militant groups. As a result of the hard knocks received by it from the paramilitary forces and the drying up of assistance from its former patron Pakistan, the movement for independence is clearly defeated. The people know this though they will not admit it. But because of the state government's failure to convince the people of its sincerity and sense of fairness, more and more people are beginning to think of Pakistan as a preferable alternative. This is by no means yet a

majority opinion, but it will become so if we persist with a policy of drift.

What then can be done? It should be clear from the history of the last two years that the militancy has flourished mainly on the basis of public support which has waxed or waned in response to the conduct of the militants but even more in response to the attitudes of the government. Pakistan has armed and trained disaffected youth but the character of militancy in Kashmir is such that it must be sustained by widespread support or fade. The militants themselves are young and impressionable and by no mean dichards. Take from them their most potent weapon of public sympathy and support and not all Pakistan's machinations or the intrigues of their supporters will sustain the militancy beyond a few months. We have made little or no effort to win the people. It is still not too late to begin.

Our objective, then, must be to restore democratic functioning in Kashmir. But to get the contending groups to participate in an election will require public pressure. This can be built up by trying to convince the people that the government is not their enemy, that India is not a Hindu state, and that no effort will be made to suborn the electoral process and the government established thereafter.

In the absence of the traditional political leadership, frightened off or destroyed in early 1990, recourse will have to be taken to the regular civilian administrators. For this the civil nature of the state administration must be restored. Civilian officers must not be put to deliberate and sustained harassment by petty paramilitary personnel. The failure to make the switch from a police to a civilian administration has prolonged the militancy. Let us not leave this till it is too late.

A host of other measures will also be necessary: opportunities for employment, a more vigorous process of releasing innocents erroneously arrested, an effort to open a dialogue with the people and the revival of a political process by regular visits of the democratically elected and politically sensitive central ministers to the valley where they could meet and listen to the public. These steps could follow as tension eases, which it will if the approach to the people is positive.

Kashmir is part of our country not as a mere geographical entity but because its people are heir to the same common heritage. As Indians they are entitled to all the civil liberties that our Constitution allows. They have the right to have their grievances heard and redressed within the bounds permitted by any democracy, and ours is still among the world's most liberal. If we show ourselves to be generous and responsive in the wake of the failed upsurge, we have won Kashmir forever. Any other course can only lead to hatred and bitterness and even to the loss of this jewel among India's states. And apart from that loss we will stand also in danger of losing our nation's soul.

### The second problem

M. J. AKBAR

THERE are two Kashmir problems, not one. The first began on 15 August 1947 when India and Pakistan became realities without the state of Jammu and Kashmir becoming a part of either; its ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh, still in a trance that would be rudely shattered within precisely nine weeks. He thought he had bought time with his Standstill Agreement proposal to both India and Pakistan; in fact he had only purchased an ocean of troubles whose distant shore is still invisible two generations later.

Standstill, however, did seem to define quite perfectly India's policy towards Kashmir, with a comatose Ministry of States unable to decide what it should do. This was a curious, even susceptible, freeze, given the admirable energy with which Sardar Patel and his secretary V.P. Menon had filled the basket of the Indian Union with those variable apples called the princely states. Had it not been for the frenetic interest that Jawaharlal Nehru took in Kashmir, even Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, the only mass leader of Kashmiris at that time, might not have been released from the Maharaja's dungeons in September.

Those were the weeks when a signature of the Maharaja and the immediate formation of a popular government under Sheikh Abdullah who had consistently rejected the idea of Pakistan ever since it was formally launched from Lahore in 1940, would have made Pakistan's claims an academic issue, and certainly Sardar Patel had sufficient leverage with Maharaja Hari Singh to ensure this much. But India waited, as it was again to do later, for Pakistan to take the initiative.

Pakistan did not waste any time. It began with an economic blockade, a very effective ploy since the mainland routes out of Kashmir then were through the territory which had gone to Pakistan: through Rawal-

pindi and Lahore. Simultaneously, Jinnah sent out political feelers to the leaders of the National Conference who were out of jail. His own, young personal secretary Khurshid was one of these emissaries, who was still negotiating when the third prong of the Pakistan initiative, an armed attack, rendered the other two irrelevant.

Jinnah did not have much time, because any peaceful transfer of sovereignty by Maharaja Hari Singh to the Indian Union could have frustrated him totally. So he selected a symbolic day, the day of the iovons festival of ld-ul-fitr, for his triumph through the streets of Srinagar. Id, whose precise date is conditional to the sighting of the moon, was scheduled to fall in the last week of October. And so the onslaught of tribals gathered from the frontier, and commanded by Pakistan Army officers in thin disguise, was unleashed in just enough time to seize Srinagar on the eve of Id—in the name of Pakistan, and in the name of Allah.

This would have happened exactly as planned, converting India's claim on Kashmir now to an academic cry in the wilderness. Certainly the state forces of Jammu and Kashmir were in absolutely no position to check this jehad. As for the Maharaja, he simply flatfooted it to Jammu the moment he got the bad news, showing his clear preference for discretion over valour. Only an arbitrary stroke of luck prevented Jinnah's triumph—because even the Indian troops could never have reached on time if the marauders had not delayed their rush through undefended roads towards Srinagar.

But instead of reaching Srinagar as soon as possible, the raiders wasted nearly two days in a ritual older than civilization: rape and loot. It needs to be noted that the crimes were only compounded by the fact that they were happening during the holy month of Ramzan,

when a gunah merits Allah's particular attention. But these self-appointed (or at least Jinnah-appointed) soldiers of Allah were not to be diverted from rape and pillage through fear of either Allah or Jinnah, giving Nehru, Patel and Mountbatten the opportunity to cobble the rescue plan which saved the better part of Kashmir for India. The rest is familiar history. But let it be stated for the record that the world recognized the legality of Kashmir's accession to India, and this was confirmed by the United Nations in 1948.

Pakistan's claim over Kashmir was one aspect of the first Kashmir problem; the plebiscite issue was the second. India, as is well known, was the first to raise the demand for plebiscite, confident about both the theory and practice of this option. The Indian National Congress had always upheld the supremacy of the popular will over the power of a feudal lord to sign away the destinies of the people, in contrast to Jinnah who supported the letter of the law through the paramountcy treaties in the hope of creating problems for India not only in Hyderabad and Junagadh but even through uncertainly ambitious rulers like Jodhpur.

On a practical level Nehru expected to win a plebiscite everywhere it might be held, in Hyderabad and Junagadh because of their Hindu majorities, and in Kashmir because of Sheikh Abdullah, whose anticommunal ideology had been bolstered by the wretched excesses of the raiders. It was not surprising that it was Pakistan which repeatedly edged away from or directly sabotaged any plebiscite in the initial years.

India's position on plebiscite only weakened after Nehru and Abdullah fell out, each old friend feeding the other's suspicions in an escalating crisis which paused only with the sudden arrest of Abdullah, and the installation of a rebel National Conference government under Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed. Pakistan, however, could still not quite muster up the confidence for a plebiscite, since Abdullah did not allow any anger against India to convert into love for Pakistan. Abdullah struck

instead towards independence: what is known as the third option.

The first two options are of course joining either India or Pakistan; it is necessary to recall, though, that a third option was not on the agenda of Partition. Otherwise there would have been more than one claimant for the third option: Bhopal, Travancore-Cochin, Hyderabad, Junagadh, a united Bengal under Suhrawardy and Sarat Bose... and heaven knows who else. This was the one thing the Congress and the Muslim League were agreed upon. India and Pakistan are still agreed against the third optionand that is still official.

It took a lot of heart-searching on the part of both Nehru and Abdullah; the death of the former just after his last initiative for peace through his old friend; a terrible stalemate war in 1965 encouraged by India's crash of 1962; endless peace talks which often seemed more troublesome than even the wars; the collapse of Pakistan's first strongman Ayub Khan; and then the cataclysmic events of 1991—but at last India and Pakistan seemed shaken enough by the tremors of victory and defeat to come to terms on Kashmir. The result was the Shimla Pact of 1972.

wenty years later it seems at least inadequate to Indian doves, a sellout to Indian hawks and a triumph of successful deception to most Pakistanis, but in 1972 India's leadership believed that it had solved one of the two sides of the first Kashmir problem: Pakistan's aspirations had, in their view, been snipped by the pincer of bilateralism and a commitment to respect the ceasefire line as the de facto border.

They set about after that solving the second side. And by 1975 they could announce a visible success here too, through the accord with Sheikh Abdullah which restored the new ageing lion to the chair he had lost in 1953. The success of this accord did not need certificates. It was there for everyone to see: tourist or journalist. As late as the tourist season of 1989, no one really suspected that anything had gone seriously wrong: Kashmir was not even an issue in

the 1989 elections, as a look at the speeches of V.P. Singh or L.K. Advani or George Fernandes or Mufti Mohammed Sayeed will prove. It was only the low poll which gave warning; by December the situation had exploded with the kidnapping of the Mufti's daughter. By January Delhi had sent its own massive package of TNT by making Jagmohan Governor.

**B**ut the second Kashmir problem actually began in the month of June in 1984. The critical decision was the unsavoury sabotage of Farooq Abdullah's government by a Delhi more concerned with power than democracy, Suddenly the mood in the valley began to sour. Kashmir had come into India because of the promise of secularism and democracy; secularism was in tatters, by any token; and now democracy had been brutalized. G.M. Shah, looking desperately for support wherever he could find it, began to give space to the fundamentalists and pro-Pakistan elements who had been kept at bay by Sheikh Abdullah as well as his

As the internal situation decayed, and the excesses of G.M. Shah finally invited central rule, Pakistan found the opportunity so long denied to it. Even in 1965 the people of Kashmir had actively supported the Indian Army, despite the incarceration of their leader. For the first time now a swing towards Pakistan began to become visible. Predictably, this swing was led by Srinagar-based youth; the sound of gunfire from Punjab played its own part in their drift, as did the careful work done in limited but concentrated areas by the Jamaat-e-Islami, which has always openly declared its allegiance to Pakistan.

The rise of the Muslim United Front and the impressive percentage of votes it received in 1987 was dramatic evidence of the new phenomenon. But it is important to note that this could never have happened without, first, Delhi's mistakes in 1984 and later allowinl such elements a foothold; and, second, the disastrous alliance between the National Conference and the Congress which won power but lost Kashmir.

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The National Conference had always played a very sensitive role in the delicate political balance of this state. It was something which Jawaharlal Nehru understood only too well: as long as he was alive he never allowed the Congress to even exist in Kashmir. The Indian National Congress was only launched in Kashmir on 26 January 1965 by Lal Bahadur Shastri, who succumbed to the pressure of Congressmen who could not see why their brand of patriotism was not being rewarded by a few loaves and fishes. This decision introduced a new line of pressure on Delhi which would eventually lead directly to disaster.

In 1975 Indira Gandhi had the personal and political authority to enforce the switch from Congress to National Conference, but ambitions will always smoulder. The real problem with Congressmen was that there was no realistic way in which they could enter office through elections; they simply did not have sufficient support. What was denied to them by democracy they tried to obtain through manipulation. And in 1984 Indira Gandhi, irritated by what she considered to be irresponsible behaviour on the part of Farooq Abdullah, punished him by organizing the defections which brought the completely cynical and thoroughly immoral G.M. Shah to power.

That was the turning point. Rajiv Gandhi did see the need to reverse this, but he simply could not resist the temptation to keep his partymen happy. The Muslim United Front occupied the space left behind by the alliance. It was only a matter of time before the militants had replaced the flamboyant rhetoric of the MUF with the deathly clatter of well-trained gunfire. The training, as we now know, came not only from camps in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir but also from the nests of the Mujahideen fighting the Afghan war

How do we know this? Because the Pakistan establishment has hardly been reticent about its boasts: General Mirza Afzal Beg, the recently retired Pak Army Chief Spoke of thousands of Kashmiri youth being trained by the Mujahideen. India's protests were generally met by a polite smile in the West for this was Pakistan's honeymoon period: the war in Afghanistan was an excuse for a multitude of sideplays. General Zia ul Haq took maximum advantage of the leniency of his sponsors. If the United States could consciously ignore Pakistan's nuclear bomb as the quid pro quo for Afghanistan, training camps were small change.

But mistakes have not been a Congress-Conference monopoly. The V. P. Singh-BIP-CPM combination, which replaced the Congress, converted a crisis into a catastrophe. First, it buckled at the knees when the Mufti's daughter was kidnapped. And then, in a disastrous fit of panic, decided to get 'tough' by sending Jagmohan as Governor. His brief but explosive tenure had at least two grave legacies. His policy of state terrorism gave a certain moral legitimacy to even something as barbaric as terrorism. And he bequeathed India with a major international problem: human rights.

This of course is the new buzzword in Western chanceries. Let us leave aside the question of why human rights rarely seems to be a problem for the Pinochets of yesterday or the Mobutus of today, or why it was never on the agenda when Zia was massacring Sindhis in 1983: the fact is that it is a problem which India has to deal with, despite all the compulsions of a government battling a completely unscrupulous and merciless enemy. The government has to prove that it cannot afford to enter into a competition with barbarity.

But there are questions yet. Kashmir has been a problem for 45 years; it was the first major problem which India faced, and I dare say it will be the last major problem to be sorted out in Indo-Pak relations. But human rights has been a problem for only two years. This is a crucial fact, which needs to be placed in front of those who support the independence of Kashmir in the name of human rights. Should a nation pay for the mistakes of a government?

Moreover, human rights in Kashmir was not brought to the atten-

tion of the world by Amnesty International or Asia Watch; it was made an issue by the Parliament of India, and as early as in February 1990. The MPs—across party lines, with the exception of the BIP—who raised a furore did not do so because they were worried about American or British opinion, they did so because they were worried about Indian opinion and Indian democracy.

Some of the Pakistani fulminations on the subject ring with a gleeful hypocrisy; for a change, they are on the right side of an issue. But Pakistani overreach could yet get Islamabad into problems. The latest view from there is that Pakistan has been forced to go nuclear because of human rights violations in Kashmir! Considering that Pakistan's nuclear programme began even before Jagmohan's first posting in 1984, this is being rather exceptionally prescient. One occasionally wonders at the IQ levels of propagandists.

More to the point perhaps is whether Pakistan can ever accept the concept of an independent Kashmir. Carefully planted hints notwithstanding, Pakistan faces a serious dilemma. To grant that Kashmir could be independent cuts right across the two-nation theory on which the very existence of Pakistan rests. If a Muslim-majority, contiguous region does not want to join a state created expressly in the name of Islam, then you obviously have a serious fault in the idea somewhere. If Islam is not sufficient to keep a nation together, then what answers do you give to Sındhi secessionists?

Both India and Pakistan have an ideological problem vis a vis Kashmir: neither can allow their founding idea to unravel. Kashmir is not simply a part of India's geography. Kashmir is a critical part of India's ideology. That really is the issue. Hence the following proposition: Pakistan cannot win Kashmir unless India loses it. And the second can only happen if India loses its essential moorings: the commitments to secularism and democracy. Protect your ideology and you protect both Kashmir and India.

## Past, present, future

JAGMOHAN

IT is not Article 1, Article 370 and other provisions of the Indian Constitution that alone bind Kashmir and India; it is the underlying current of history and culture that provides the much stronger bond between the two. To say that the contemporary scene alone concerns us and we have nothing to do with the past is to take a very narrow view of reality. For, to be aware of the present, without being aware of the past, is to have a deceptive view of things. As Cicero rightly observed, 'Not to know what took place before you were born is to remain forever a child.'

When I landed in the Kashmir valley during my first tenure as Governor in April 1984, I was fascinated, despite the obvious wounds that had been inflicted on its landscape, by the beauty of its streams and springs, its meadows and mountains. But looking at it against the background of its unfortunate history, I wondered how much of heartlessness was hidden in

the hard strata of those mountains, how many betrayals had been scattered over those meadows, and how much of hardship and misery had flowed with those streams.

Viewed in the context of the deeds of its kings and their courtiers, the history of Kashmir, with a few illuminating exceptions, is a long and lamentable tale of conspiracies and collusions; of incessant upheavals, intrigues and counter-intrigues; of repulsive pettiness and nauscating profligacy; and of monstrous vices and abominable crimes. Vincent A. Smith correctly remarked: 'Few regions in the world could have had worse luck than Kashmir in the matter of Government.'

But history does not tread the path trodden by kings and sultans alone. It treads many other little paths, lanes and by-lanes. History is the biography not only of the ruler but also of the ruled, and whichever area it traverses, its direction is influenced by the wind blowing from the ideas that emanate

from the spiritual workshop of the community — its religion, culture and traditions.

Seen from the plane of ideas, the history of Kashmir would reveal what a beautiful cradle it has been of ancient culture. 'Ancient India has nothing more worthy of its early civilisation than the grand ruins of Kashmir.' The remains of hundreds of temples, stupas and viharas and numerous schools of thought show how in ancient times it served as a nursery of two great religions of India—Hinduism and Buddhism—and how these religions met and mingled in the mindscape of the people.

Kashmir formed part of the kingdoms of such great rulers as Asoka and Kanishka. Harshavardhana, too, exercised suzerainty over it. Lalitaditya (724-761), the celebrated ruler of the Karkota dynasty, was not only a great conqueror who was motivated by ambition similar to that of Alexander the Great, but also a great builder who constructed the glorious temple of Martand, in honour of the Sun-god. About this famous construction, Stein said, 'The ruins of this splendid temple are still the most striking objects of ancient Hindu architecture in the Valley.' The same cultural attributes are discernible in the ruins of Avantipur, the town built by the great king of the Uptala dynasty, Avantivarman (855-883).

hen Islam made its appearance in the middle of the 14th centry, it acquired its own distinct hue in the valley. It spread not by forcible conquest but by gradual conversion. Coercive methods were occasionally employed, as during the regime of Sultan Sikander (1389-1413). But its extension was largely the result of the work undertaken by missionaries like Saiyid Ali Hamdani and Saiyid Muhammad Hamdani. Though it spread rapidly, it did not displace to any significant extent, local customs, beliefs and practices. Even otherwise, in their basic ingredients, the Sufi and Rishi orders, which constituted the core of Islam in Kashmir, were not irreconcilable with the general milieu and spiritual disposition of the Indian people. These orders

were essentially eclectic and catholic in outlook. The benevolent and tolerant rule of the great Sultan, Zain-ul-Abidin (1420-70) symbolized this outlook.

Until recently, Kashmiri ethos had been shaped largely by the Sufi and Rishi religious orders. The Sufi order in Kashmir was served mainly by saints and preachers from Persia and Central Asia, while the Rishi order, which also drew inspiration from general Sufi thought, had a deeper imprint of local mystical traditions and was propagated by the sons of the soil. The outlook of the Rishis is best brought out in the following verse of its founder, Sheikh Nuru'd-Din:

There is one God, But with a hundred names. There is not a single blade of grass, Which does not worship Him.

L he virtues of Kashmiri Islam contemplation, asceticism, renunciation, abstinence, simplicity, co-existence—are common to the virtues admired in the best of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. It is more in tune with the Indian pluralist society. It was because of these virtues ingrained in the Kashmiri psyche that no bloodshed, no intolerance, no communal frenzy was exhibited in 1947 when the rest of the subcontinent was severely jolted by the storm of narrow communalism and fanaticism. The Rishis had all along preached:

We are the progeny of the same parents, Then why should we differ?
Let Hindus and Muslims together adore God alone.
We came to this world like

partners,
We ought to share our joys and
sorrows together.

It is a pity that such edifying thoughts and beliefs, stamped upon the spiritual landscape of Kashmir, were not perceived and their significance was not grasped in the post-Independence period. Every leader of the central and state level developed an obsession with his game of power and totally ignored the religious and cultural roots that could have made politics scrupulous, institutions fruitful and the social

order of the Union and Kashmir harmonious and integrated. The exploiters, in pursuit of their petty aims, showed no hesitation in planting the seeds of narrowness and narcissism and thus causing poisonous trees of disharmony and disruption to appear on the scene. But by and large, the social and cultural ethos of India and Kashmir continued to have common features during the rule over Kashmir of the Mughals (1589-1753), the Sikhs (1819-1846) and the Dogras (1846-1947).

In the eve of the country's Independence, a number of forces were operating on the political firmament of the state. There was the National Conference headed by Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah. It dominated the valley but had only limited influence in Jammu and Ladakh. It had developed close rapport with the leaders of the Indian National Congress, particularly Jawaharlal Nehru, but its equation with the Muslim League was marked by hostility. Mirwaiz Moulvi Yusaf Shah, who had a wild and fanatical following in the downtown area of Srinagar city, was antagonistic both to the National Conference and to the Congress.

Then there was the Muslim Conference, which had a slight following in the valley but had rapidly acquired strength amongst the Muslims of the Jammu region during the last two years. This was due to its ideological affinity with the Muslim League, which had the potential of spreading its influence in the valley also. Voices for independent Kashmir were also being raised here and there. The Maharaja was yet another force. The Dogra Raiputs of Jammu considered him their own kith and kin. The relations between him on the one hand and Sheikh Abdullah and Pandit Nehru on the other were marked by mutual distrust and dislike. None of the three leaders was able to rise above his pride and prejudices while taking vital decisions with regard to the future of the state.

All these forces and actors were soon to play their part in the first act of the tragic Kashmir drama. The Maharaja was indecisive, Jinnah was impatient. Pandit Nehru was caught

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between his idealism and the stark realities of the situation. Sheikh Abdullah, with streaks of megalomania and duplicity embedded deep in the layers of his mind and with Jinnah's doors closed to him, was nursing secret ambitions to carve out a Sheikhdom for himself and his coterie. So all these actors were pushed on to the stage with each one imagining a different plot and in the belief that the drama would play itself out in their favour. Consequently, there was confusion and inconsistency on the stage. Mistakes after mistakes were made. One miscalculation gave rise to another. And Kashmir soon found itself in the whirlpool of national and international controversy and conflict.

The first grave mistake was made when Maharaja Hari Singh flirted with the idea of independence. While the Maharaja procrastinated, Pakistan finalized its plan to grab Kashmir by force. On 22 October 1947, a full-scale tribal invasion, backed by Pakistan regulars, was launched. The tribesmen, comprising Afridis and Mahsuds, and the Pakistani regulars, the 'volunteers' and the 'freedom fighters' all operated under the overall command of Akbar Khan, a Major General in the Pakistani army, who was given the code name of 'General Tarig'. The Maharaja quickly acceded to India and sought its help. On 27 October Indian forces landed at Srinagar airport and started driving out the Pakistani intruders.

On 1 January 1941, India approached the United Nations for help over the Kashmir issue. This was another mistake, for it immediately entangled Kashmir in the web of international power politics. At every stage, India faced rough weather. On 1 January 1949, both India and Pakistan agreed to a ceasefire. Simultaneously, events moved swiftly in Jammu and Kashmir. Sheikh Abdullah was first appointed by the Maharaja to head what was called the Emergency Administration. On 4 March 1948, he was appointed the Prime Minister with a Council of Ministers. He came to acquire practically all the executive powers of the government. In whatever he did, reasonable or unreasonable, he was

supported by Jawaharlal Nehru, much to the chagrin of Sardar Patel.

After the execution of the Instrument of Accession on 27 October 1947, and adoption of the Indian Constitution on 26 January 1950, the state of Jammu and Kashmir was irrevocably brought under the territorial and constitutional jurisdiction of India. A special provision—Article 370—was made for it in the Indian Constitution. This was yet another mistake.

L he current turmoil in the valley has long been in the making. Its roots lie embedded in the soft and permissive attitude of the central leadership, in the politics of deception, in the spurious democracy, in the habit of nursing illusions, in the unwholesome legacies of the past, in the fundamentalization of religion, in the infirmities of administration, in public corruption, in environmental disruption, in regional differences, in disintegrative constitutional relationship, and in the overall dynamics of negative forces. It is not possible here to go into all the underlying causes, but even a few of them can illustrate their long-term deleterious impact.

The major culprit was the politics of deception and duplicity. Basically, Sheikh Abdullah was neither for India nor for Pakistan. It was his power game that took precedence over everything else. What suited him at a particular moment was all that mattered. From 1947 to 1952, he kept proclaiming that accession of Kashmir to India was based on fundamental principles and was irrevocable. In 1948 he told Jawaharlal Nehru, 'We have made our choice and linked our destiny with India, and nothing can separate us now.' On 7 March 1949 he announced. 'We have decided to work with and die for India.'

While he was making such solemn declarations, he was sounding out various parties for support to the idea of having an independent Kashmir. As early as 28 January 1948, Sheikh Abdullah discussed the subject of independence with American officials. This is evident from the note sent by Warren Austin to the State Department

after an interview with Sheikh Abdullah on 28 January 1948. Again, on 14 April 1948, Sheikh Abdullah gave an interview to Michael Davidson of Scotsman, in which he said, 'Independent Kashmir, guaranteed by United Nations, may be the only solution.' He made the same suggestion to Sir Owen Dixon in 1950. At that time, Sheikh Abdullah also wanted to enter into bilateral talks with the leaders of 'Azad Kashmir'. This was the working of the mind<sup>1</sup> of a person whom Nehru, in a letter to the Maharaja dated 13 November 1947, described as 'the only person who could deliver the goods in Kashmir'.

Politicization of religion was another undercurrent that continued to cause serious erosion. The hundreds of loudspeakers installed on the mosques these days, and the speeches delivered from pulpits, are nothing but a continuation and intensification of practices started by Sheikh Abdullah and his National Conference. When Dr Qazi Nissar, chief of Ummat-i-Islami, was assailed by the National Conference leaders for exploiting religion for elections in March 1987, he shot back: 'Who taught us to do so? What had Sheikh Abdullah been doing in his life-time? Did he not make his speeches from Hazratbal Shrine? Have the National Conference workers forgotten the 1977 and 1983 elections when they moved with the Holy Quran in their hands to seek. votes?

At the most crucial moment of our history-around 1947 and thereafter-Kashmir failed to look beneath the surface and grasp the significance of the underlying religious and cultural forces—the reconstruction and rechannelization of which would have provided a solid and sound foundation to Kashmir's new polity and its relationship with India. This relationship could have been of mind and soul rather than based merely on a trite constitutional provision—Article 370. The inner beauty and lustre of the Kashmiri's Islam could have provided the spiritual underpinning to its positive link with India. But un-

l For detailed data and documents, refer to pp 97-98 and pp. 136-49 of my book My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir.

fortunately, the reverse gear was clutched. Not only were the healthy traditions in Kashmir's culture damaged and destroyed but unhealthy ones were propped up and fertilized. The most potent force in this arena was Jama'at-i-Islami. It tilted the Kashmiri social and cultural ethos towards fundamentalism and fanaticism.

he brand of democracy which was practised in Kashmir was largely based upon negative factors and forces. For instance, the elections during the period February 1975 to November 1986, were fought by the National Conference with fascist techniques.<sup>2</sup> The electorate was never allowed to think rationally. It was assiduously propagated that if the Kashmiris wanted to get rid of 'slavery' they must vote for the National Conference. The cult of personality, built around Sheikh Abdullah, was exploited. The Sheikh was portrayed as a champion of Kashmiri freedom, as a destroyer of central leaders.

The weakness of the central government, its vaccilation, its frequent changes in stand, its lack of commitment to clear goals, the ostrichlike attitude of the governors, the disproportionate praise of Sheikh Abdullah and his family, all emboldened the National Conference to follow their fascist course. Quite a sizeable section of the central leadership, the press, and the opposition were taken in by the double talk or were influenced by extremely narrow political considerations. None had the courage to call a spade a spade or work towards understanding the deeper currents.

Unfortunately, for much of the last 44 years, 'the spirit of Munich' has determined the attitude of the Indian decision-makers towards Kashmir. A vague hope has been entertained: tomorrow it will be all right. But it will never be all right. The logic of history is against it. Catholicity and compassion are one thing, timidity and permissiveness quite another. Hollow and hypocritical values and soft and superficial attitudes never help. They do

not placate, but encourage aggressive dispositions. Buying momentary peace at the cost of basic values only means planting the seeds of trouble and turmoil for the future. Permissiveness, in the ultimate analysis, spells disaster on both the sides—in fact, for all concerned, even for those who simply choose to stand and watch from the sidelines.

Over the years, Article 370 has become an instrument of exploitation in the hands of the ruling political elites and other vested interests in the bureaucracy, business, the judiciary and the bar. It breeds separatist forces which, in turn, sustain and strengthen Article 370. Apart from the politicians, the richer classes have found it convenient to amass wealth and not allow healthy financial legislation to operate in the state. The provisions of the wealth tax, the urban land ceiling act, and gift tax etcetera, and other beneficial laws of the Union, have not been allowed to operate in the state under the cover of Article 370. The common masses are prevented from realizing that this article is actually keeping them impoverished and denying them justice and their due share in the economic advancement. It has created perpetual tension among the people of Jammu, Ladakh and the valley. It has also kept the unwholesome legacy of the two-nation theory alive. Its overall impact has been disintegrative.

Pakistan took full advantage of the fundamental infirmities of our set-up and started engineering internal subversion and terrorism. It understood that the foundation of our edifice was made of spurious material which could be infested with white ants from within and brought down by a gale of low intensity. The experience of three armed conflicts—1947, 1965 and 1971—had also brought home to Pakistan that brute force alone would not work.

A well-considered, three-phase plan was drawn up. In the first phase, all the components of the power structure had to be infiltrated and subverted from within. A friendly, permissive or collusive political regime had to be brought into being. Infiltration in police, general services and other organs of the administrative machinery had to be carried out extensively but deftly. Care had to be taken to ensure that central intervention did not take place till the time was ripe for total internal subversion and armed intervention by Pakistani forces. Special effort had to be made to involve the students.

In the second phase pressure had to be mounted on the Indian Army in Siachen, Kargil and other vulnerable areas so that the army remained engaged on the border and had no spare capacity to deal with internal subversion or low-level insurgency. In the third phase, possession of the valley had to be secured by intensified internal subversion and attack from across the border.

 $\mathbf{F}$ akistan provided not only moral, political and propaganda support to the subversionists in the valley, as it itself admitted, but also actively helped them to train in guerilla warfare and techniques of contemporary terrorism. Batches after batches of Kashmiri youth were trained in POK and Pakistan. Sophisticated weapons and finance were made available. A strong underground network for motivation, recruitment and guidance was set up. Besides the houses of Ghulam Mohammad Wani at Athmuqam and Raja Muzaffar at Muzaffarabad, the barracks of the Field Intelligence Unit of Pakistan at Kalamulla Chakothi. Tilwari, Nausheri, Dudbnial, Kel, Kamri and Minimarg were used as launching pads for the purpose. The operation was largely conceived. controlled, and directed by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan, which virtually functioned as a 'state within a state'.

The ISI pursued the plan with remarkable diligence, but its success was largely ensured by the inexcusable blindness of the J&K and Union governments. My repeated signals hoisted in 1988-89, about the gathering storm, were ignored. Even when I bewailed, in a letter to the Prime Minister in April 1989, that 'tomorrow would be too late', nothing was done. About six months after I left the state, the kidnapping of Dr. Rubaiya Sayeed, daughter of the Union Home Minister, on 8

<sup>2</sup> For supporting data and election postures, see My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir, pp. 149-53.

December 1989, illustrated the extent to which internal subversion had taken place.

Prior to this event, 1600 violent incidents, including 351 bomb blasts, took place in 1989 alone. Almost all the components of the power structure had been seized by subversives and terrorists, or rendered actionless. Things came to such a pass that even the District Magistrate refused to sign the warrants of detention and the Advocate-General did not put in an appearance on behalf of the state government. State government hospitals became centres of collusive and conspiratorial activities. Practically all the facilities of these hospitals were available to the terrorists. They ate the hospital food, slept on the hospital beds, hid their weapons in the hospital stores, sneaked into staff quarters whenever necessary, and escaped from the backyards through secretly-charted routes.

In many ways, Kashmiri terrorism is not very different from other brands of contemporary terrorism. Yet it has acquired special features of its own. The amalgam of different elements from diverse sources has produced a distinct alloy. Here, terrorism is largely sponsored by the neighbouring state of Pakistan and fanned by the forces let loose in the region by the developments in Afghanistan. The traditions of Islamic militancy are selectively used and doctored to subserve the overall design. So far as the techniques of operation on the ground are concerned, the concepts formulated by Mao Tse Tung and Che Guevara are liberally borrowed. The models of the Iranian and Algerian Revolutions and the struggle of the Palestine Liberation Organisation are also kept in view.

As an illustration, take the 'Pamphlet of Guidelines' issued by the J&K Liberation Front to its members. It has been authored by Raja Mohammad Muzaffar. Titled 'Freedom or Martyrdom', it contains comprehensive instructions to the 'freedom fighters' and exhorts them to follow them strictly. These instructions, so far as they pertain to guerilla or underground activities, are by and large the Urdu trans-

lation of Mao's well-known dicta, such as, 'the enemy advances, we retreat; the enemy camps, we harass; the enemy tires, we attack; the enemy retreats, we pursue'. They also include Che Guevara's formulation: 'Each guerilla or "freedom fighter" must show impeccable moral conduct and strict self-control and teach the local population the guerilla band so that they see the advantage of aiding the insurgency.'

The cue for extensive use of the clergy and the mosque is taken from the Iranian Revolution. From the same source comes the propaganda line of painting the ruling elites as leading a luxurious and un-Islamic life and the masses as steeped in poverty and subjected to all kinds of social, economic and administrative injustices. But the pre-eminent place is accorded to the idiom and ideology of militant Islam.

When I returned to the valley on 19 January 1990 for my second term, I found that it had been badly stricken with violence, bloodshed and brutality. The 'ceremony of innocence' had been completely drowned. The huge administrative apparatus resembled a sprawling but lifeless octopus. The Kashmiri terrorist had become the real ruler. The ground had been yielded to him to such an extent that he dominated the public mind.

L was left in no doubt that a diabolical plan of subversion was being worked out. A final blow was to be struck on 26 January, which also happened to be Friday. It was planned that about a million people would be exhorted through the mosques' loudspeaker to proceed in small batches and congregate at the Idgah. Simultaneously, hordes of people would move in from outlying areas. However, through a well-planned strategy and determined efforts, we were able to frustrate their sinister design. And the process of reassertion of authority and of wresting control from the subversives and terrorists began. A series of innovative decisions were speedily taken and a number of top terrorists arrested. Several heinous crimes, such as the kidnapping of Rubarya Sayeed and the killing of Lasa Kaul. Director, Doordarshan, and Mushiar ul-Haq, Vice-Chancellor, Kashmir University, were solved. Extradition warrants for Amanullah Khan on the basis of disclosures made by Shaukat Bakshi, a key figure of the subversive movement, were also obtained from the court.

It is quite clear that there were five major factors that tilted the balance heavily in favour of the subversives and appropriate options in regard to them had to be worked out.

Firstly, the subversives had convinced the public that their victory was certain. This conviction had to be replaced by a counter-conviction that it was state administration that was going to succeed. After the state demonstrated its determination to do so from the third week of January 1990 onwards, the wind slowly started changing its direction. Secondly, the young and politicallyambitious youth had no healthy outlet to express their political aspirations. For most of them, subversion and terrorism had become a mere extension of 'politics'. To remedy this, a clear outlet and line of retreat had to be provided. The dissolution of the State Assembly was a move towards the attainment of this objective. Efforts had to be made, albeit unobtrusively, to point out that line of retreat to all concerned.

Thirdly, the core of the Kashmiri society was still conservative. The puritanical role which most of the subversive groups projected for themselves had an innate appeal for the commonfolk, particularly since they were fed up with corruption and accumulation of wealth in certain hands. Special emphasis had therefore to be given to the clean and honest image of the new set-up.

Fourthly, the 151 of Pakistan was trying hard to unite all subversive groups under the leadership of pro-Pakistani elements. It was necessary for us to ensure that this did not happen. Jama'at-i-Islami, Hizbul-Mujahideen and other groups which were fundamentalist and pro-Pakistani had to be prevented from becoming dominant by mounting a relentless pressure on them and blocking avenues, such as schools,

through which they acquired special influence in the society.

Fifthly, there were a number of background operators who fanned subversive activities and who, if proceeded against, could raise, by virtue of the influential position they held, a lot of hue and cry. Such elements existed in the bar, the medical profession, the press and in business. A lot of propaganda dust could also be kicked up by them through writ petitions, resolutions and publication of biased versions in the press. It was necessary to bring home to these elements that their tactics would not go unnoticed, and they would have to face the consequences of aiding or abetting subversive activities.

My options had started yielding encouraging results. By the middle of May, 1990, the situation had qualitatively improved. No longer did the JKLF flags flutter on the houses, tree-tops and lamp-posts; no longer were 'V' signs exhibited on the streets; and no longer were subversive slogans written on the walls and posters seen on them. On the contrary, the people were themselves erasing what was once written on the walls of private houses. Occasional shootings from street corners of congested colonies were a sign of frustration rather than of any assertion of supremacy.

nfortunately, it was too much to hope that a straight and clear line of action, a demonstration of determined will to succeed, innovation in the administrative set-up, dynamic coordination, and an intense and sustained pressure on subversive elements would survive in our work environment. These were not the usual products of the current national ethos which . breeds deviousness and an almost infinite capacity to be destructive rather than constructive, negative rather than positive.

I became a victim of the negative forces of the Indian political system. From the first to the last day of my stay, I had to face not only the most grim and critical battle of terrorism and subversion but also an equally extensive and dangerous battle of disinformation and distortion. I could hold my own, and

even win the first battle, but not the second. For instance, a group of busybodies, calling themselves human rights organizations, descended upon Kashmir when an extremely critical situation was being tackled. They virtually rationalized terrorism. They denounced, not the killers and kidnappers, but the security forces and whatever little administrative set-up could be dredged up from the dismantled debris. These bodies and other vested interests wanted the nation and the world to believe that it was not the ruthless Kalishnikov of the marauders, it was not the hysterical exhortations from hundreds of loudspeakers fitted on religious buildings, it was not the sinister design of 'killing one and frightening one thousand', but the 'inducement of the trucks', that impelled the Kashmiris to abandon their homes and hearths.

A his happend despite the fact that the country was generally appreciative of what had been done in a short time. The Union HomeMinister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, voiced the view of the Government of India as a whole when he forcefully lauded in the Parliament on 25 April what he called 'tremendous work' done by me. Mufti said: 'Jagmohan had to function in a vacuum, in a situation where there was no respect for law or authority of the state government. He braved terrorists, instilled courage in government officials who had almost given up the situation as a lost cause. It is very unfair for anyone to criticise Jagmohan for what he has done for the country." After my resignation at the end of May 1990, a top terrorist significantly remarked: 'Removal of Jagmohan raised our hopes. Thanks to V P Singh's decision, for the next 15 days, we managed to reinforce and strengthen ourselves.'

The result is obvious. Kashmir's agony has been unnecessarily prolonged. The casualties have gone up. The expenses have mounted. Kidnappings have increased. And the kidnappers dictate the terms. The pervasive impression is that the authorities can be bent to agree to anything, including acceptance of defiance by its employees. The psychological advantage has thus

passed on to the militants and their writ counts with the officials, particularly at the lower level and the middle level. So far, about 4,500 lives have been lost. About 200,000 Hindu Kashmiris and 80,000 Muslim Kashmiris have moved out of the valley. The recent kidnapping of DIG (Security) on 21 January and the bomb blast on 24 January in the office of the Director General, in which five top officers were seriously injured, show which way the wind is blowing.

Some suggestions about more autonomy have been made. The protagonists of such suggestions ignore the practical realities. Both for plan and non-plan finances, Jammu and Kashmir is heavily dependent upon the Union government. The five-year plans are wholly funded by the centre. A substantial part of its non-plan expenditure is also met by the Union. For instance in the budget for the year 1988-89, about 74% of its revenue receipts were by way of transfers from the central government. While the state got about Rs. 1,003 crores from the central government as grants and loans, its own total receipts were about Rs. 234 crores. The state's salary bill for the same year was about Rs. 277 crores, that is, more than its receipts. Had the state been truly autonomous and left to its own resources, it would not find a single paisa for any plan or development work. It would also be unable to pay salaries to a good number of its employees.

Kashmir has to remain a part of India. Legal, constitutional, financial and practical considerations apart, neither the integrity nor the democratic polity of India can be maintained without it:

It should be evident that the problems in respect of Kashmir are far more complex, chronic and rooted in the follies of the past and inconsistencies and inadequacies of the present. The future holds no promise, unless great vision, courage and perseverance are shown. As a long-term strategy, a strong reform movement has to be built—a movement which would provide a healthy social, political and cultural ethos to the country. Many grave challenges

with which the nation is faced can be effectively tackled only by a reformed, rejuvenated and motivated India, with a new vision, and not by an India that has become a hunting ground for small politics whose shallow and superficial approach has exceeded all limits in Kashmir and whose leaders have exhibited an almost infinite capacity to live under the shadows of illusions rather than face realities.

As short-term measures, the options which I had exercised and which I have indicated above, need to be followed. Briefly, these options are: put strong and sustained pressure on the terrorists and their collaborators; treat the situation as low intensity war; organize counterguerilla groups; block effectively the supply line of the adversaries; prevent the flow of state resources to the terrorists; identify and remove subversive elements from government and semi-government organizations; provide an honourable line of retreat and also a route to power through fair and free elections to all except pro-Pakistani fanatics; prosecute speedily through the 'designated court'; and maintain a consistent line of action.

If our policy changes from incident to incident, then we cannot succeed, particularly since with the passage of time, more complications might arise. For instance, India's panicked reaction to the threatened march of the JKLF across the Line of Actual Control almost put the country in Pakistan's trap. By calling the ambassadors of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, India has made a serious error of judgment. Pakistan, on the other hand, has acted cleverly. Its spokesman, in an ironical gesture that subserves his country's diplomatic purpose, 'accused India of internationalizing the Kashmir issue unnecessarily'. When the international community, by and large, had accepted the view that the Kashmir issue should be settled on the basis of the Shimla Agreement, India, in continuation of its 'tradition' of bungling, has taken another wrong turn. Also, too much publicity has been given to the JKLF. Let us hope and pray that this error does not prove as costly as other errors in the past.

# The way out

GEORGE FERNANDES

A QUESTION often asked these days in the context of the situation in Kashmir is: has it reached the point of no return? However, none asking this question seems to have a clear view on the point: return to where? For obvious reasons. The point of return would vary from person to person and from group to group.

For instance, what does the Congress party consider as the ideal situation in Kashmir? An opportunity to rig elections and to foist a puppet government on the people of the state as it did for most of the time since that fateful day it declared Sheikh Abdullah a traitor and had him locked up in prison? If the Congress had not been defeated in the 1977 general elections and the Janata party not come to power with Morarii Desai as Prime Minister, the Kashmiri people would never have got to see a ballot paper to this date, so total was and is the commitment of the Congress of Jawaharlal Nehru and his progeny, not excluding the family's retainers, to rigging elections, particularly in Kashmir.

To many politicians and bureaucrats it would mean the oppourtnity

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to indulge in unbridled corruption. While politics in India has always been a hot-bed of corruption, in Kashmir, with democratic checks almost unknown and with rootless politicians living on handouts from the government or ruling party bosses in Delhi, personal and family aggrandizement has been the name of the game—of course, with few honourable exceptions.

A question that was constantly posed to me by the youth involved in the armed revolt against the Indian state, when as a member of government I tried to persuade them to give up their insurrectionary politics and join the democratic mainstream, was: India has spent one lakh crores of rupees in Kashmir since 1947. Where has that money gone? The first time this question was posed to me, I was successful in convincing the young men that it was not one lakh crores but only 50 thousand crores. Later, during a routine oral report to President Venkataraman on my work in Kashmir, when I told him about this question, his words were: 'George, you are wrong; the boys are right. We have spent one lakh crores in Kashmir.

had, of course, told the boys where that money has gone. Into secret accounts in the Swiss banks; into high-rise apartment buildings in Bombay; into palatial houses with Italian marble swimming pools in South Delhi; and into the huge orchards in Kashmir. In short, into unmitigated corruption and aggrandizement by politicians and officials. My explanation that such siphoning of funds earmarked for development was not an exclusively Kashmiri phenomenon, but was a national pastime of the power-elite did not impress, much less carry conviction, with the young people of Kashmir. They continued to demonstrate their determination not to tolerate such rot any more, at least in Kashmir: let the rest of India decide what it wants to do.

To the Kashmiri pandits, living in exile in their own motherland, it would mean a return to their homes and hearths (and hopefully to their occupations) from where they have been uprooted for the last two years and more, courtesy Jagmohan's policies. Of course, there are several thousand families of Kashmiri pandits who have refused to leave their beloved land and have continued their professional and other economic pursuits in that valley of sorrow and pain, thereby giving a lie to the well-organized campaign of lies and slander mounted against the Kashmiri Muslims by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India and abroad.

In June 1990, on an official visit to Washington as a member of the government (I had by then been relieved of my short stint as a minister looking after Kashmir affairs). I met with representatives of Kashmiri pandits settled in the United States at a meeting organized by the Indian Embassy. Blood-curdling stories of rape and killing of Kash-miri pandits by Kashmiri Muslims were narrated to me by people who looked quite sensible. It is only when I asked them for the names of the persons and places where such gory incidents had taken place that I discovered that those who had narrated these stories were highly irresponsible people. They had not one name of a person and/ or place to give me.

I have reasons to believe that today, should the Kashmiri pandits make up their minds, singly or collectively, to return to the valley, they might be surprised to find themselves being welcomed by a friendly Muslim population, many of whom have been looking after the abandoned homes and orchards of the pandits. Of course, there will be some problems, particularly in respect of jobs in public undertakings and services. One grouse which the vast mass of educated, unemployed Kashmiri Muslims have is that 30% of Kashmiri pandits have 90% of the jobs while 90% have to jostle for 10% of the jobs.

And what is the point to which the BJP would like to return? Fortunately, they are so articulate and vociferous about their perceptions on Kashmir that there is no room for any speculation here. Remove Article 370. Never mind if it means shattering the faith of the Kashmiris in the plighted words of the nation's

leadership given at a time when Kashmir was at a crossroads, and in the secular character of our Constitution.

The BJP, of course, will not want to remember that when Pakistani raiders invaded the country in the aftermath of the sub-continent's partition, when the Hindu (Dogra) ruler of Kashmir was working out a deal to declare independence for his kingdom, it was the Kashmiri Muslims — the parents and the grandparents of the young men who are today asking and fighting for Azadi-who fought these raiders and subsequently the Pakistani armed forces before Lord Mountbatten ordered Indian troops to move into Kashmir. In the subsequent fighting with Pakistan, Brigadier Usman died in action defending Kashmir from Pakistani aggression. And till a few months ago it was General Mohammad Zaki who, as the Corps Commander of the Indian troops in the valley, was standing guard for India. (General Zaki is now Adviser to the Governor of Jammu & Kashmir.)

One point on which the BJP does not elaborate when it talks about Kashmir is that its concern is with the real estate that Kashmir is and not the people who inhabit it. Of course, there is insurgency in Kashmir-no one denies that, not even the insurgents. In private discussion and through public statements, including on radio and television, I told the Kashmiris, particularly those involved in the insurgency, that when they fire their AK-47s. they will necessarily receive a response with more fierce weapons. The point which the BJP ignores is something which even the best of our generals and soldiers emphasized in Kashmir—that the solution to the insurgency will not come through more killings. It will have to be hammered out through discussion and negotiation.

The bulldozing and firing at Turkman gate during the emergency on behalf of that 'extra constitutional authority' called Sanjay Gandhi had sharpened the already strong destructive streak in Jagmohan. This reached its peak in Kashmir when, as the hatchet man of Indira Gandhi, he butchered democracy by dismissing the legitimately elected government of Farooq Abdullah's National Conference. Instead, he installed a puppet government headed by Gul Mohammad Shah, whose patriotism was always suspect in Delhi's eyes and who, for a variety of reasons was one of the most hated persons in Kashmir.

How and why Jagmohan came to be reappointed as the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir is a story that must be told by those who made that appointment. But some unsavoury facts and bitter truths must be told here. I was a member of the Cabinet Committee which was set up to consider, among other matters, who should be appointed as Governor of J&K consequent upon the resignation of General Krishna Rao. In five or six meetings of this committee a few names came up for consideration. Jagmohan's was not one of them.

One day, a much-agitated Farooq Abdullah sought an urgent meeting with me and told me that he had heard that Jagmohan was being appointed the Governor of J&K, and if that happened he would immediately resign from chief ministership. I assured him that this information was baseless and that he should not unnecessarily get upset. At the next meeting of the Cabinet Committee, I sounded out my colleagues to discover if anyone had proposed Jagmohan's name or if it was even remotely under consideration, and got emphatically negative replies.

Two days later, Farooq made another frantic call. This time he was absolutely certain that Jagmohan was being made the Governor and said that while he wanted to believe me when I repeated that he would not, it was no longer possible in view of the information which had reached him from unimpeachable sources. He said he was fighting India's battle in Kashmir and if my government had decided that he had to go in the same way as Indira Gandhi had decided on an earlier occasion, he would not wait for Jagmohan to dismiss him, but would resign the moment the appointment was made. Then he stunned me with the statement that Jagmohan's appointment was only twenty-four hours away.

The next morning I met the Prime Minister and asked him if he had Jagmohan in mind for appointment as Governor of J&K since in the Cabinet Committee his name had not came up for consideration. When his reply was an emphatic 'no'. I told him of my dilemma; the two meetings with Farooq Abdullah and what he had told me. My dilemma, I said, was that I did not want anyone-Farooq Abdullah included-to blackmail my government into doing or not doing anything. At the same time, if Faroog were to carry out his threat, I did not want my Prime Minister to accuse me of witholding from him what Faroog had told me. I received no indication at all that Faroog's information about Jagmohan was correct. I left Delhi for the North-East later that day. Jagmohan's appointment as Governor was announced that night by the Home Ministry.

hile Faroog found an easy way out of the Kashmir imbroglio with his resignation, I soon found myself saddled with the responsibility of Kashmir affairs in addition to my job as Minister of Railways. After my first visit to the valley on taking charge, I laid down my priorities in Kashmir. First on the agenda was the question of dealing with the human suffering which was inherent in an insurgency. Innocent persons were being shot dead or injured. Indiscriminate arrests of the young and old were taking place and the parents of the young and the children of the old were totally in the dark about their whereabouts. Nor did they have a clue about the reasons for their arrests.

The eternal curfew meant total starvation for the poor and the daily wage earners. Economic life, especially the tourist trade on which the livelihood of several lakh people depended, came to a total standstill. The apple orchards provided the other mainstay of the economy. With terror stalking the land, Delhi's traders who bought the apple crops and paid for it in advance failed to turn up, and the orchard owners, particularly the small growers, needed money to buy insecticides to

protect their crop and also to maintain themselves. Hospitals and schools were not functioning. The state administration was unable to respond to innumerable problems which the Kashmiris faced.

L he slogan of azadi had reached a crescendo and many of the young people toting their newly acquired weapons believed and led others to believe that freedom was indeed round the corner. They also thought that their demand would receive the support of some Western powers, and Pakistan would finally intervene. They saw in the fast unfolding developments in the Soviet Union—the three Baltic states had asserted their independence—a parallel which they believed applied to their own situation. This was the flower of Kashmiri youth, innocent and charming yesterday; today determined and deadly and yet still innocent in many ways for they did not understand the power and might of the Indian state and of the international intrigues and treachery that nation-states indulge in to serve their own self-interest.

There were the problems of the Kashmiri pandits who had everything going so well for them till just the other day, but who, under Jagmohan, in the furtherance of his game plan had overnight become refugees in their own country. Their money, whether from their jobs or from their business, was frozen in the banks; there was no possibility of finding alternative jobs in other parts of the country; the camps they were lodged in lacked even basic civic amenities; their childern were traumatized and the bureaucracy did not seem to be particularly fond of them, so much so that it found many ways and means of either delaying or not implementing the decisions taken to provide them with some minimal relief.

It did not take me long to realize that many in my government were not happy with the way I went about with my work in Kashmir and soon obstacles were placed in my way. As for Jagmohan, he acted as I expected he would. When during a meeting in Srinagar's Raj Bhawan I suggested to him that speedy measures be taken to work out a scheme

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to market the apples and in the process help the apple growers, he had the nerve to tell me that all the owners of the orchards were Muslims; that all Muslims were terrorists; and that these orchards were used as hide-outs and training camps for the insurgents. He would not make one paisa from government coffers available to the apple growers as in his view all that money would go to fight the government. Earlier during the day—at a meeting with the state officials, I had discussed this idea in detail, and there was unanimity among them that its implementation would have a positive fall-out all around.

Under Jagmohan the radio and TV centres in Srinagar were literally mutilated. Men and women-mostly Muslims but not excluding Hindus—who had staked their lives to keep the nation's media network alive were openly branded as antinationals. Some were dismissed, many were given penal transfers, and all were subjected to untold mental torture living in mortal fear of the insurgents and being harassed and humiliated by the Srinagar Raj Bhawan and Delhi's radio-TV Bhawan combine. When a new station manager sent from Bangalore chose to call on me when I was in Srinagar. he was subjected by Jagmohan to severe reprimand and threatened with dire consequences. In the process, a very potent weapon that could have been used to reach out to the youth and the people of Kashmir was rendered ineffective.

My house in Delhi became a place of shelter for several Kashmiri youth who came to me in search of jobs. My gates were always open, with no guards or check posts. I believe they. appreciated this as others who came to my house did. I decided to make stalls available at railway stations for these unemployed young persons to sell Kashmiri handicrafts, dry fruit and apple juice. Hundreds of young people flooded my residence with their applications. Even as these applications were being processed and some technical-legal problems being overcome, the government was defeated.

Another decision I took after ceasing to be Minister for Kashmir

Affairs was to have the railway catering service market the apple juice produced by the J&K government factory. The apple growers, government factory workers and senior officials of the state were happy with this decision. But again, the fall of our government put an end to this effort to help the Kashmiri people out of their economic misery and later no one felt it necessary to implement this decision for the sake of national interest. Lakhs of packets of apple juice prepared for supply to the railways had to be thrown away.

Wherever I went in Kashmir, Ladakh and even in the Jammu region; there were always hundreds of youth asking for jobs. In Doda, the District Association of the Unemployed gave a list of two hundred graduate engineers who were unemployed and wanted jobs, yes, anywhere in India. Somewhere in Rail Bhawan must be several hundred applications, individual and collective, of Kashmiri and Ladakhi youths asking for not axadi, but jobs in the railways.

L he power-elite in India do not want to confront the problems they have created in the last 45 years of axadi, when they used the state to fatten themselves, their offspring and their hangers on, thinking that when the crunch came (I cannot believe that all of them could have been so ignorant of the inevitable consequences of their greed and avarice), they would use the power and might of the state to crush all those who rose in revolt. And no matter how you look at it, in Kashmir it is the revolt of the masses against a state that has been insensitive to their hopes and aspirations and has consciously and deliberately tried to suppress them into becoming an underclass. Let us not forget that in another period a few thousand years ago, another powerelite with the same awareness and deliberation, suppressed a majority of the Indian people into becoming the undercastes.

Is there a way out at all in Kashmir? Yes, I believe there is. Not one, but more ways than one. Firstly, talk to Pakistan. After all Pakistan

is occupying one half of Kashmir and, by all accounts, treating the people in that half as second-rate citizens. Secondly, make India a genuinely federal state in which the states are not the vassals of whomsoever gets into power in Delhi and can dismiss state governments even for whimsical reasons.

A hirdly, talk to Kashmir's new. leadership. Whether one likes it or not, all these young men and women are the new leaders of Kashmir. Did not a bunch of students emerge as the leaders of Assam and win power in the state? Of course they made a mess of it; but not any worse than the rest of the highly mature leaders from Kashmir to Kanyakumari have done. Let the new leadership in Kashmir run things the way they want in a federal India of hundred states that are autonomous in their territory. Let the federal authority be charged with defence, external affairs, currency and communications, and, perhaps, national and international air transport, and a common railway system in which all states have their equity holdings.

Fourthly, take all necessary initiatives to form a confederation with Pakistan and Bangladesh and, if possible, Nepal, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, with a united Kashmir as one distinct entity in that confederation. Such a confederation alone will enable the countries of the sub-continent to overcome their prejudices and mutual distrust, and result in saving between 30 and 40 thousand crores of rupees a year which are now squandered away on maintaining huge armies and equipping them with killer weapons manufactured by the world's armament manufacturers located in Europe and in America.

A tremendous redistribution of resources towards development would strengthen the entire sub-continent and the economic benefits would bind the confederation in the same manner as is being done in Europe today. Kashmir would no longer be used by Western powers as the breeding ground for weapon-users or drug peddlers engaged in keeping the third world from standing on its own feet.

### A window to India

BADRI RAINA

AS someone whose metropolitan pilgrimage has not entirely obliterated his quite beloved Kashmiri identity, I must confess to finding it hard to think of Kashmir with a distanced, academic sentience. Frantz Fanon once wrote of himself that as a black man he simply cannot be objective about history. I can easily empathize with the perceptual bind Fanon expresses, especially after what I can only describe as the recent custodial rape of the valley: the invading posse of Murli Manohar Joshi was, after all, in connivance not just with the Congress party but open and protective state patronage. The conquering flag was implanted at Lal Chowk to the menacing accompaniment of bared, phallic bayonets.

There is an opinion that the Indian state has been truly adroit in stealing BIP thunder by tactfully collaborating to conquer; it is an opinion I fail to share. Whereas Narasimha Rao's Congress may well have recaptured some of the Hindu high-caste vote it has been losing to Advani's party, it certainly has lost the last shred of trust that the common Kashmiri may have wishfully placed in it.

I begin, therefore, from a situation where a 'Hindu' Indian state and politics are perceived to have made their coercive assertion over a 'Muslim' Kashmir, lending welcome strength to local forces that have been desperate to propagate that Kashmiris are not Kashmiris but Hindus or Muslims, and that the Indian state's alleged secularism remains confined to the text of the Indian Constitution. Indeed, it is already widely suspected that the Congress party wishes at bottom to do precisely what the BJP stridently canvasses for, namely repeal Article 370. Such is the state of confidence one experiences at the present moment.

Nor does there seem much point any more (at least so long as there is the present resistance to reconceptualizing 'India' as a community) in recalling certain unforgettable histories—the fact that Kashmiri nationalism emerged in the decade of the twenties as a composite, antifeudal, liberatory movement, that the call 'Kashmir' for Kashmiris' was first issued not by some Muslim fundamentalist organization but by Kashmiri pandits, that Kashmir saw one of the earliest working class upsurges during that period (the silk strike of 1924). Or, that Sheikh Abdullah and the Reading Room Party brotherhood were to return from Aligarh Muslim University and opt for a secular, democratic, politics defying the historical constructions of the Muslim League,

that Jinnah was to return defeated from Kashmir.

Or that the first popular council of ministers within Kashmir (1948) was to undertake to fight believers in the two-nation theory from across the border with unbelievable resolve and heroism, that Shahid Sherwani was to sacrifice himself to save the city of Srinagar and, at 25, die a gruesome death at the hands of his co-religionists at a time when the new nation was engulfed in communal carnage. Or that Gandhi was to say that Kashmir was the one place where he saw 'any light', that Sheikh Abdullah was to speak in the Kashmir Constituent Assembly of a 'modern politics' which could not be based on considerations of religious preference, or that he was to sign the Delhi Agreement of 1952 on the basis of another sort of faith, namely, faith in the protestations of a Nehruvian nationbuilding programme and in the undertaking by the new central government that accession to India would leave all functions except foreign affairs, defence, communications and currency to the jurisdiction of the state.

Or, that despite the perfidies affected within the state after Sheikh Abdullah's first incarceration in 1953, Kashmiris yet again stood up to the invasions of 1965 and 1971. Or, the callous jettisoning by the centre of the accord with Farooq Abdullah notwithstanding, the Kashmiris, against every odd, yet again participated in the electoral process of 1987 only to see their franchise brutally dishonoured and looted from the ballot boxes under their very eyes.

Given a now all-too-familiar political ecology at the Indian 'centre' which dictates that the interests of the 'nation' must either be seen to be coterminous with the interests of the ruling party, or where this is not possible, then indeed subservient to the interests of the ruling party, where is the point, as I said, in recalling histories which have been systematically and criminally erased over the last four decades?

How remote those histories seem is suggested by the fact that the

valley is today denuded of a whole segment of Kashmiris, victims of the fear fostered, let it be remembered, by an erstwhile Governor of the state—that they are unsafe within a 'Muslim' Kashmir. It is another matter, of course, that the contrary belief that they belong naturally and solicitously to a Hindu India (including a Hindu Jammu) has actually come unstuck after the experience of the diaspora. Not many care to know that the diaspora includes over a hundred thousand Kashmiri Muslims as well; nor are we told how that fact is to be accounted for if the Kashmir problem is at bottom a Hindu-Muslim problem.

One or two other facts have been sought to be systematically pushed under the carpet; the fact, for example, that even at the time that militancy began to be taken over by the Hizbul Mujahideen with 181 instructions to weaken Kashmiri ethnicity by effecting communal killings, an average of six Muslims to one Kashmiri pandit were being killed per day. Or, the current fact that those pandits who chose to stick it out-and there are over 5000 of them—continue to live not only untroubled but often protected and lionized by Muslim Kashmiris. It is in that context that the 'ekta yatra' will go down as a tragic intervention; for in the months prior to it there had been dependable evidence of a Kashmiri ethnicity-at-siege reasserting itself in consequence of a complex spectrum of experience.

Not only had there been two open, public demonstrations of protest against the criminalities engaged in by the militants, but also a widespread breach in the Islamic hegemonic designs of Jamait politicians inside and outside the valley. Over 1000 Pakistan-trained militants had, in fact, dropped out of militancy as a result of their disillusionment with the Islamic pretences of their mentors as well as sub-human treatment meted out to them in camps across the international border. Young Kashmiris were beginning to openly say that as Kashmiri Muslims, the ethnically different Pakistanis could never accord them anything but a second-class status. Indeed, the bitter lessons learnt by the Pakistani Muhajirs, the Sindhis and the Baluchis at the hands of the ruling Punjabi Pakistani elites were becoming the lessons learnt by Kashmiri Muslims as well.

And, concomitantly, the lessons learnt by Kashmiri pandits in the camps at Nagrota, Jammu, Delhi and elsewhere have not been too different. Especially, and ironically, in Jammu province itself their coreligionists have been making it quite plain to them that they constitute an unwelcome threat to local Dogra prospects in regard to higher education, jobs and housing. It is the sort of grouse that interested propaganda would have us believe only Kashmiri Muslims have had against the pandits, and only for communalist reasons! The bitter experience of social ostracism and of ecological alienation had been leading many of these migrants to see themselves afresh as Kashmiris rather than as Hindus.

L he prospects of a reconstructed ethnicity was therefore beginning to offer possibilities which, had the intentionalities of the Indian state been above board, could have been shaped and harnessed to sound democratic purposes. There is even some reason to believe that after its initial and tragic assault on the JKLF -precisely what Pakistan would desire most, since no form of Kashmiri autonomy has ever been acceptable to it—the Indian state might have been coming around to the view that its best chance of doing business was with the JKLF. Consequent upon the official complicity with the 'ekta yatra' it would be suicidal for an otherwise secular and liberationary JKLF to be seen negotiating at all.

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Kashmir—and whatever has happened there over the past four decades—carries, as must be obvious, some far-reaching macro-implications with respect to ideologies of nation-building in a post-colonial situation. Any evaluation of the meaning of Kashmir in that sense is inseparable from questions about the meaning of 'India'. And however much we may be told that the answer to that question ought

to, in one way or another, be selfevident, the fact is that there is no single answer. And whatever answers have been forthcoming—in direct ways and through indirectly propagated images—are, after all, ideological constructions which issue from the concrete interests of political classes stretching from the far right to the far left.

Thus, for example, if a pre-independence Congress apparatus leading an anti-imperialist struggle had, per necessity, to forge the idea of a 'nation' through wide but controlled people's participation, that very object and praxis was to be counter-productive to the interests it represented once political power had been achieved. Not further extensions and intensifications of democracy but its shrewd curtailments were seen to be conducive to its sectarian reality. Thus it could not but be that the equation between a pre-independence and a postindependence Congress on the one hand and Kashmiri (as well as other regional aspirations, Tamil Nadu being a case in point) nationalism on the other would be qualitatively different. Sheikh Abdullah and the National Conference before 1947 carried one sort of value to the Congress but another sort of menace after, as the Congress began to locate 'India' within the Congress party and the bureaucratic structures of the city of Delhi.

Problems related to Kashmir, Punjab, the North-East, more freshly to Jharkhand, Vidharb, even Patnaik's Orissa, may then be seen as issuing from the progressive breach between the theoretical adherence of the Congress to the provisions of the Constitution and its pragmatic refusal on the ground to lend substance to those provisions. That, of course, is not to say that the Constitution is theoretically such a perfect instrument where the enabling of a grassroots democracy or federalism is concerned. But that there is a lot there that remains unused.

Despite its best manipulations, however, the hiatus between a shrill rhetoric soliciting unity (especially since 1974) and the ever-increasing loss of that unity (often directly engineered by the Congress itself,

not just in Kashmir, Punjab and so on, but repeatedly within states governed by its own ministries) in actual practice has come home to roost. One must of course hasten to add that the political failure of the Congress has crucially reflected its unwillingness to address the hard and objective reasons of disunity within the country.

In that context, just in passing, its current surrender to international lending agencies expresses the new naked resolve of the Congress to further democracy in India in the interests of a predatory miniscule metropolitan minority to the exclusion of the dispossessed and labouring majority. (Nor is that fact irrelevant to an understanding of the Kashmir problem; many among the militants are those who question with severity and with commendable information the inequitous distribution of economic power within an otherwise ethnically uniform valley.)

Be that as it may, with the failure of the Congress to deliver political democracy or credible institutional practices, as well as to forge effective alternate hegemonies, other constructions of a 'viable' nationhood have sought to occupy the weakening central political space. India, we are now told, suffers its present woes, symbolized most acutely by the unholy aspirations of the Kashmiris (aided and abetted by a psuedo-secularist modernity) because we have been used to seeing it as a pluralist and diversified historical space; these woes can end only if we recognize that 'India' is a civilizational idea, indeed a transcendent emotion that renders any thought of difference sinful and subject to punitive correction.

Curiously, however, one or two things here remain unexplained. For instance, any thought that an Indian Muslim may have of Mecca is a traitorous one; yet, any thought that a Kenyan or Indonesian Hindu may have of Ayodhya or Varanasi remains laudable and not at all 'antinational'. One imagines, as things get sillier and politics more transparent, that such a position may not hold in the case of Indian Jews with thoughts of Jerusalem. There, perhaps, proponents of the civiliza-

tional-nationalist idea are likely to be understanding beyond belief.

Grounded in an idea of cultural monolithism and the resolve to enforce that idea, this particular version of 'India' could not but lead to the strident planting of the flag as the demonstration of a totalitarian will to carry out the coercive incorporation of a recalcitrant 'periphery'. It would do either that, or prefer that such a periphery was ejected altogether in order that the centre is rendered homogeneous and trouble-free. It is not for nothing that the RSS has at bottom desired that a 'Muslim' Kashmir should go join Pakistan. Were that to happen, the reality of a Hindu India might become truly self-evident, besides proving that the assassination of Gandhi was after all the result of a sound proposition. The tri-colour then might truly give way to the saffron dhwaja vindicating the position of the RSS prior to 1949 when the ban on it was lifted on condition that it would henceforth accept the tri-colour, and that its operations would be open, democratic and non-militarist.

In this sort of overall context, the comment of the BIP leader, L K Advani, on the actual nullity of the flag-hoisting event offers, I think, a revealing ideological text. Advani counted the event a success because it demonstrated how perilous it is to raise the tri-colour in Srinagar. Two implications are embedded in that observation: one, that the Kashmiris are totally unpatriotic and anti-national; and that they are so because they are Muslims. Such an analysis enjoins that either the state affect a no-nonsense forcible subjugation of the valley, or that it accept the view that only a Hindu-majority Kashmir can be a nationalist Kashmir. So that, repealing Article 370, a demographic solution is carried

Why such a solution has neither been suggested nor attempted in the Punjab where, after all, the Hindus more or less already balance the Sikhs as a percentage of the population, the BJP will not tell us. Perhaps the Sikhs continue to be regarded, whatever they may think, only as Hindus of a certain sort!

Or, perhaps a militant Sikh backlash to such a course is silently understood to be, as a possibility, uncontainably fiercer than a possible mild-mannered Kashmiri resolve! The moot point, nevertheless, remains that in no circumstances is it to be admitted that the protest of the Kashmiris can have any sort of legitimacy, or, perish the thought, that it may be a legitimacy more widely applicable to other areas of the territory denoted India, and areas not Muslim-majority at that.

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A third construction of 'India' that has been struggling to find acceptance is one which believes precisely that Kashmir and other 'peripheries' do have a legitimate case. It makes bold to suggest that 'India' ought to have a primary reference to the vast labouring masses who create national wealth but who remain largely non-existent as far as mechanisms of decision and control are concerned. Such a view requires that political democracy, first of all, be made real and operational. Let us remember that since 1952 the Kashmiris have, in reality never been allowed to exercise franchise (with the exception, perhaps, of 1977). Further, it argues that political democracy, unless substantiated with cultural democracy and socio-economic equity, must remain meaningless. So much of what happened among the young people in Kashmir, Punjab, Assam and elsewhere has had to do with the fact that there has been simply no place for them within the productive processes of the nation.

A his model of nation-building brings into question philosophies of 'development' which have thus far been peddled as global and 'normative'. It underscores the perception that such development has issued from a disastrously sectarian and exploitative social thesis, and lies at the root of many of the contradictions that rip the country apart. For that reason, the notion of 'consensus' remains, at bottom, a desperately wishful upper class, upper caste ploy increasingly doomed to fail. In seeking to decentre the unitary state, this view insists on the need to reverse many previous histories (in

Kashmir and everywhere else), leading not just to enhanced benevolence on behalf of 'natural' rulers, but to an *empowerment* of the people themselves.

One is, then, suggesting that Kashmir is not just an isolated issue. In fact, the tactics of the Congress and the BJP (and all its manifestations) have been precisely to resist that suggestion. They would have us believe that the Kashmir problem exists either because of Pakistan, or internal corruption. Important as these factors are, what needs to be recognized is that Kashmir has been by and large a fairly patient victim of a repressive, centralized notion of 'nationhood' and of the role of ruling social and historical interests.

Now vested and cut-throat those interests are was recently suggested by the singleminded fury and purpose with which the political class backing them sought to oust VP Singh. The message has been that no political force may henceforth question the basic assumptions of centrism and yet ride to state power. Or, alternately, question and deconstruct the alleged homogeneities of a civilizational idea and be rewarded with popular favour which may become instrumental in forging such democratic and pluralist unities as would render fascist cultural and social regimentation an impossibility. I think, therefore, that Kashmir be seen as a site upon which the most crucial debate and contention with regard to our existence as a 'national' entity is being played out. One hardly needs to belabour how desperately fatal the stakes here

As I write this, the proposed JKLF march across the LAC has not materialized. And, its failure to materialize owes, most of all, to the fact that Pakistan did not wish it to. Nothing suits Pakistan less than to allow ascendance to a group which speaks in the name of an independent and undivided Kashmir from a secular platform. It is not for nothing, therefore, that the JKLF chief in Srinagar, Javed Mir, issued his statement castigating Pakistan for playing traitor with it.

That the JKLF itself has here been the victim of its own tactical dupli-

city must be obvious: if its movement is a secular one aimed at liberating both parts of Kashmir, it makes pretty little sense for it to be marching from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir to the valley. The assumption has to be that Pakistan-occupied Kashmir is already its own, when the JKLF platform itself suggests that there can be no grounds for believing that it is so. Such an assumption must, in fact, only lead to the conclusion that its protestations about secularism and independence are, at bottom, suspect if it can believe Pakistani soil to be a friendly one.

If, however, one were to suppose that the contradiction springs not from a theoretical ambivalence but from a tactical misjudgment, then the overall politics of the JKLF may be seen as an attempt to recover the character and content of the National Conference movement in the late 1930s and 1940s. Nor are the genesis or the aspirations of such a politics very different from those of the erstwhile 'rebels' in Laldenga's Mizoram or the present-day ULFA in Assam. Had the meaning and the rationale of the history within Kashmir since 1952 registered on the Indian state, it might have shown the genius to seize upon the secular energies of the JKLF and evolved an understanding whereby democracy could in fullness be obtained in Kashmir.

Such an event could have had the consequence of conclusively weakening communist politics, encouraging initiatives towards a federated union, rendering separatist forces ideologically enervated, bolstering the faith of the masses in a peaceful and democratic praxis, and setting the nation on a rediscovery of its pluralist potential. A far-sighted political will, I believe, could devise structural principles that preserve and satisfy the needs both of unity and difference. In fact, it had better be understood that if unity is to be preserved at all there is no other course but to first respect difference and to empower local initiatives in nation-building. There really is no choice in the matter unless, decrying all that has happened in the Soviet Union, we still choose to risk going the same way.

## Redefining 'integration'

SUMANTA BANERJEE

KASHMIR is becoming a major lever for compelling us to come into the open with our misgivings about the moral validity of the Indian nation-state in its present form. If the central authority has to be repeatedly invoked to integrate diverse communities which are held under suspicion of centrifugal tendencies, it violates the spirit of federalism which is supposed to have shaped our Constitution. If the legitimizing ideology of 'national integration' to which such centralization is integrally tied, leads to the alienation of the people of a unit of the 'Union of States' and to centralized injustice and repression on those people, then surely 'integration' is antithetical to genuine federalism.

Since the centre's bedevilled relations with Kashmir are not an isolated instance (but are getting replicated in its behaviour with other states like Punjab, Assam and the North-East), it is about time that Indian politicians redefine the entire concept of 'national integration' and redetermine the boundaries of central intervention and abstention in relation to the states of the Indian Union, as well as the various groups and sub-groups that make up the heterogeneous entity called 'India, that is Bharat'.

In an extreme form, Kashmir epitomizes the Indian state's failure to overcome the unresolved contradictions inherited from the preindependence era, all over the country. The contradictions are between the central ruling authorities and the regional units, as well as among traditional linguistic, ethnic, religious and other identities which divide the Indian people and come in the way of their struggle for establishing an egalitarian society. They express themselves in different forms, ranging from constitutional debates between the centre and the state governments over the question of reallocation of resources and more powers for the states, to expanding extra-constitutional armed confrontation between the central rulers on the one hand and on the other, secessionists demanding independence as in Punjab, Kashmir, Assam and the North-East.

These contradictions quite often spill over into multi-level violent feuds like class conflicts between landlords and landless peasants, fratricidal warfare between one caste and another, or one linguistic community and another, and communal riots between Hindus and Muslims. The justification of a centralized authority (based in New Delhi) to

offset fragmentation and control disintegrative forces has not really led to a resolution of the contradictions.

Since 1947, the Kashmiri people have been suffering from the ravages caused by one form of conflict or another. At the heart of all this is the basic irreconcilable contradiction between powers claimed by the centre on the one hand, and the autonomy demanded by the Kashmiris on the other. A brief survey of major developments and political changes in Kashmir during the last four decades would indicate the gradual erosion of the autonomy that was pledged to the people there by New Delhi at the time of Kashmir's accession to India in 1947.

At a secondary level, conflicts within Kashmir among the various political interests, as well as among the different religious and ethnic groups, have taken their toll. Disunity and distrust have eroded the possibility of the emergence of an effective political leadership that can rally the entire people to protect their autonomy. As a result, guns (resorted to both by the state and the secessionist terrorists) are rapidly edging out any options for a democratic solution of the centrestate conflict in Kashmir.

Un 2 November 1947—a week after Kashmir's accession to India -the then Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru announced over the All India Radio: 'We declare that the decision regarding Kashmir shall be made by its people...neither can we revoke the pledge, nor shall we revoke it.' Nehru's statement was made in the context of his commitment to Sheikh Abdullah on the latter's insistence that the people of Kashmir through their own Constituent Assembly would determine the internal Constitution of the state (of Jammu and Kashmir) and the nature and extent of the jurisdiction of the Union of India over the state.

Since popular election were yet to be held in Kashmir, and a Constituent Assembly formed there, the framers of the Indian Constitution at that time decided to incorporate a special Article in the Constitution (Article 306A, which corresponds to the present Article 370) to make 'temporary provisions' for accommodating Kashmir into the Union of India, and yet allowing it to enjoy a special status, different from other units of the Union. That this was going to be a temporary arrangement was evident from the speech made by Sir N Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, a member of the drafting committee of the Indian Constitution, who moved the special Article at the Constituent Assembly of India, and expressed the hope that '... in due course even Jammu and Kashmir will become ripe for the same sort of integration as has taken place in the case of other (princely) States...' (speech on 6 October 1949).

Lt is important to remember that this euphoric belief in 'integration' -nurtured by the makers of the Indian Constitution (in their role as nation-builders)—was not shared by the Kashmiri political leadership. While the national mainstream politics, headed by Nehru, expected the Kashmiris to be grateful to New Delhi for having protected their autonomous identity from being overwhelmed by the Pakistani invaders, and for emancipating them from a monarchical dictatorship, the people of Kashmir, precisely because of their strong sense of identity-and independence-did not appear to be prepared to sink that identity in a so-called 'integration' with India. Almost from the beginning, differences cropped up between New Delhi and the Kashmiri leaders regarding the interpretation of the instrument of accession, the scope and permanence of Article 370, and the centre's jurisdiction over the state.

The Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir was convened on 5 November 1951, and it prepared a Constitution which said that the state was 'an integral part of the Union of India'. The Government of India held that this implied the application of the provisions of the Indian Constitution to the state in all matters like citizenship, fundamental rights, and President's powers. The National Conference leaders (who came to power in Jammu

and Kashmir after the 1951 elections there) on the other hand, held the view that their state had acceded to India only in three subjects—external affairs, defence and communications. As for the other subjects, the centre could extend its jurisdiction only with the 'concurrence of the Government of the State'—as specifically stated in subclause (b) (ii) of clause 1 of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution.

We should add in this connection that one of the reasons why the new state government in Kashmir was reluctant to adopt the other provisions of the Indian Constitution, particularly those relating to the judiciary and fundamental rights, was its fear that they would adverselv affect the land reforms that the government had just initiated in the state. In other states, taking advantage of the fundamental rights provisions, landlords went to the courts and succeeded in obtaining injunctions against the state governments' attempts at taking over their land (held in excess of the officially fixed ceiling). Kashmir was one of the few states where the government was able to successfully carry out land distribution among the landless. This was possibly because it was unencumbered by the legal obligations of an Indian Constitution which in its most liberal extension of 'fundamental rights' could allow feudal interests to fight for their right to hold on to their landed properties, and leave it to the judiciary (often comprised of the same landed interests) which arbitrated in favour of the landlords.

But that apart, there seemed to be a question of principle involved in Kashmir's refusal to accept the application of the Indian Constitution in toto. In his speech at the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir Sheikh Abdullah, while reiterating that the state's accession to India was 'complete', supported the refusal to accede to all the constitutional provisions by arguing that he was asserting the autonomy of his state and was thus 'serving as a spearhead' for other states. He added that the federation (of Indian states) formed voluntarily would be a stable one'. (Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly Debates, Vol.

IV, No. 3, quoted in Balraj Puri's Jammu and Kashmir—Triumph and Tragedy of Indian Federalisation, 1981, p. 146.)

It is this observation made as far back as the early 1950s that hits the nail on the head of Indian federalism. It also knocks the bottom out of our government's claim of a democratic consensus behind the establishment of the 'Union of States' called India 'that is Bharat'. The moot historical question is: was the establishment of the 'Union' a result of a voluntary agreement by the different regional groups and heterogeneous communities to join the 'Union', or was it a continuation of the territorial and administrative structure inherited from the centralized British colonial rule which could not allow any unit the right to secede from the given geographical area left under the administration of the Congress following the 1947 partition of the sub-continent?

L he framers of the Constitution of independent India assumed that the entire population of the territory that they had inherited was automatically a part of the 'Union of India'. There was no attempt to assess the choice of the tribal population of the north-east, or the Sikhs of Punjab through any democratic process. The Constituent Assembly which prepared the Constitution—let us remember—was not a fully representative body as it was not elected on universal franchise. Let us also remember that among all the political parties at that time, it was only the Communist Party of India which consistently demanded a democratic verdict from the people as to the future shape of the 'Union of India'. P C Joshi's pamphlet For the Final Bid For Power (1945) urged for 'sovereign national constituent assemblies' elected by universal suffrage on the basis of linguistic regions and electing in their turn an all-India Constituent Assembly, with each region or 'nationality' retaining a right of secession. The Congress leaders however accepted the election of the Constituent Assembly by the existing provincial legislatures which were elected on limited voting rights. (Re: Modern India; 1885-1947 by Sumit Sarkar. New Delhi, 1983, p. 427).

Given this background, Sheikh Abdullah was expressing a more honest spirit of federalism than his Congress colleagues when, in the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly he asserted the right of his people to enjoy certain rights independent of the Indian Constitution, notwithstanding Kashmir's accession to the Indian Union. The Constituent Assembly of the state which he was addressing was elected on the basis of universal franchise (technically at least), unlike the Constituent Assembly of India which drafted the Constitution.

What is more significant in today's context is Sheikh Abdullah's observation then that a federation 'formed voluntarily would be a stable one'. It has a prescient ring in today's situation, where we find increasing instability in different parts of the country primarily due to the drive for centralization by an intransigent New Delhi determined to ride roughshod over regional aspirations and demands for local autonomy. Dismissal of state governments, imposition of Presidential rule, central discrimination against certain regions in the matter of development and resource allocation, arbitrary use of coercive laws like National Security Act, TADA (Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Prevention Act)—are all leading to a gradual estrangement of the people of various regions from the ruling powers at the centre.

But Sheikh Abdullah's plans for an autonomous Kashmir within the Indian Union went awry because of hurdles from both inside and outside the state. Some of the hurdles were of his own making; others were set up by politicians of various hues. One of the built-in problems was the religious and regional diversity within the state which often stood in the way of rallying the entire population there behind the demand for autonomy. While 98% of the population of the Kashmir valley are Muslims, in Jammu, Hindus constitute about 62% and Muslims around 34% of the people. In the third region, Ladakh, the inhabitants are of a distinct racial stock (belonging mainly to Tibetan, Mongol and Dardic origins) who follow Buddhism. In the Kargil tehsil of Ladakh, the Shia Muslims again form a distinct sub-cultural entity.

Even the Hindus of the state cannot be described as a homogeneous community. The Dogras who dominate Jammu have a different mothertongue and follow a different cultural life-style from the Hindu pandits of Kashmir valley who, along with the Muslims, speak 'koshur'-the language of the Kashmiris. Outside these three main regional identities, there are the Gujjars, mainly nomadic, who are Muslims, but speak a different mother-tongue and have retained a distinct cultural and racial identity (cf Balraj Puri, op. cit.).

Differences among these various communities in general and distrust of Kashmiri Muslim domination over the politics of the state in particular, aggravated by the UN Security Council resolutions (of 13 August 1948 and 5 January 1949) which recommended a plebiscite in the state to determine whether the people wished to accede to Pakistan or India (ignoring thereby the other possible popular option of independence). Fears-although unfounded -that the Muslims in the valley and Jammu might together sway the plebiscite in favour of Pakistan, led the Hindus and Buddhists to drift in different directions.

L he Hindus tended to rally around the newly-formed Bharatiya Jana Sangh (the predecessor of today's BJP—Bharatiya Janata Party) which started an agitation in 1952 demanding the abrogation of Article 370, and the full merger of the Jammu and Kashmir state into the Indian Union. In Ladakh, the Head Lama of the Buddhist community there, Kushak Bakula challenged the National Conference government's jurisdiction over his region, demanded autonomy and warned that 'longings for a political union with Tibet (which borders Ladakh) would become pronounced if Ladakh's entity within India was not respected'. (cf Balraj Puri, op. cit.).

To some extent, Sheikh Abdullah and his National Conference party were also responsible for this growing estrangement of Jammu and Ladakh from Srinagar (the capital from where the state government was operating). During the September 1951 elections (which elected the State Constituent Assembly), opponents of Abdullah (concentrated mainly in Jammu) were debarred from contesting the elections by the returning officers (who were obviously loyal to the Sheikh) on flimsy technical grounds, as a result of which the National Conference 'won' all the Assembly seats 'unopposed'.

This did not augur well for democracy in the state. High-handedness in administration, use of the official machinery for party interests, rule by a coterie centred around the Sheikh-all these trends that followed the coming to power of the National Conference, further alienated the political opponents. The situation was a mini replica of what was beginning to happen in the Congress-ruled centre and states. What was dangerous in Kashmir. however, was that among the Muslim politicians in the valley, reaction against the National Conference government's authoritarianism tended to assume the unfortunate shape of a campaign for plebiscite in favour of Pakistan.

Sheikh Abdullah himself did not seem to be much bothered about the increasing alienation in Jammu and Ladakh. For him, the most important thing was the autonomy of the valley of Kashmir, or in other words-freedom from the obligations of the Indian Constitution to be able to do whatever he felt was good for his people in the valley. As early as 15 August 1947, he said in Srinagar: 'If the people sincerely desire to separate and establish a separate Dogra Desh (of the Jammu people), I would say with full authority on behalf of Kashmiris that they would not at all mind this separation.' Still later, he stated: 'If Jammu and Ladakh so desire, they can decide to integrate with India and leave the valley free to have a limited accession' (cf Balraj Puri, op. cit.).

Thus, right from the beginning, Sheikh Abdullah's politics were primarily valley-centred, making it difficult for him to preside over the entire state and take into account and reconcile the differing needs and identities of the various communities inhabiting the state. Growing divergence between the popular mood of the three regions, increasing tensions with the centre on the question of devolution of powers, and factional quarrels within the National Conference finally led to the ouster and arrest of Sheikh Abdullah on 9 August 1953.

The Sheikh's personal tragedy and the degeneration of his party illustrate what were to become common trend in India in the next four decades - the rise of regional leaders on the wave of popular movements for local autonomy, their failure to reconcile the divergent interests of groups and personalities within the region, and the centre's cunning manipulation of these divergences in order to cripple the movement for autonomy and tighten central control over state politics in these regions. This was to happen to the Akali Dal in Punjab, the Dravida Kazhagam movement in Tamilnadu, the Jharkhand agitation for a tribal state in east India, and much later to the AASU (All Assam Students' Union) movement in Assam.

Sheikh Abdullah's arrest was followed by the ascension of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad as the leader enjoying the centre's blessings. Although he and his family were under a cloud because of allegations of corruption, New Delhi chose to prop him up against the Sheikh, taking advantage of his conflict with the Sheikh and his desperate need for protection from possible prosecution. As he proved to be a pliable tool in the hands of the centre, it was now easy for New Delhi to further dilute the autonomy which the state had been enjoying. The President of India proclaimed on 14 May 1954, the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, by which the jurisdiction of the centre was extended from the original three subjects (Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications) to all subjects on the Union list.

Central extension undoubtedly brought the people of the state within the purview of certain social welfare benefits (relating to labour, social security, employment, trade unions, etcetera) that were being

enjoyed by other Indian citizens. But at the same time, it encroached upon the state's autonomy in certain areas (like the application of the Constitutional provisions relating to central services such as the IAS and IPS, to the state, which came into force through an amendment in 1958). Since then, more provisions of the Indian Constitution have been extended to the state in an attempt to 'integrate' it into the Indian Union. This has been done with the concurrence of the successive governments in Srinagar, headed by handpicked (by New Delhi) politicians like Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, G M Sadiq and Syed Mir Qasim. Elections, even when they were held in Kashmir, were usually rigged in order to keep these people in power. Erosion of democracy within the state (which ironically started from the days of the Sheikh) went apace with the crosion of its autonomy.

Even Sheikh Abdullah's release in 1964, and his return to power in 1975, could not reverse this process. The Indira Gandhi-Sheikh Abdullah Accord signed on 24 February 1975, was generally welcomed in the valley, primarily because it paved the way for the resumption of office by the Sheikh, whose charismatic personality still aroused hopes among the people who expected an end to corruption and communal tensions and improved administrative efficiency. The accord made the state 'a constituent unit' of India, and curtailed the powers of the state by insisting that the 'decisions of the (state) Assemby shall not become effective unless the assent of the President is obtained'.

In spite of this, the popular expectations from the Sheikh, and the elections in 1977 (during the Janata regime)—considered by the people to be the first 'fair' elections in the state—seemed to inaugurate a period of peaceful and democratic development in Kashmir. But regional and communal divergences soon took over. The valley-centred Sheikh's failure to implement his commitments to Jammu and Ladakh regarding regional autonomy revived the old anti-Srinagar animosities there.

The Hindu communal elements in Jammu sought to exploit the situa-

tion by organizing an agitation in 1978-79 demanding political and constitutional safeguards, and later in 1981 by mobilizing the Hindus under the Hindu Vishwa Parishad Conference in Jammu in March that year. The communal elements among the Muslims also plunged into the scenario in a bid to damn the Sheikh as a 'traitor' for having agreed to dilute the state's autonomy under the 1975 Accord with Indira Gandhi. In the summer of 1980 the Jamaate-Islami organized an international Secrat Conference in Srinagar, riding high on the crest of the wave of world Islamic fundamentalism that had started spreading its poisonous fumes in Kashmir by then.

I he rumblings—communal, regional, as well as within the National Conference—which remained muffled to some extent as long as Sheikh Abdullah was alive, thanks to his charismatic personality, came out into the open after the appointment of his son, Farooq Abdullah as the state's Chief Minister in 1982. Interestingly enough, the succession issue in Kashmir politics was settled on the same dynastic lines as in New Delhi under the Congress regime. Farooq, who had never played any significant role in the state's politics in the past, was inducted as the Health Minister during the lifetime of his father who also nominated him as his successor. This provoked the ire of another member of the Abdullah family-G M Shah, the Sheikh's son-in-law-who was a member of the cabinet. He resigned in protest. His personal ambition to be the next Chief Minister, thwarted by Faroog's appointment, provided a convenient tool to the Indira Gandhi-led central government to queer the pitch of Kashmir politics in the next stage of New Delhi's plans to tighten control over the state.

After having failed to ride piggyback on the shoulders of the National Conference (which refused to have any alliance with the Congress-I, and won the 1983 elections on its own), Indira Gandhi weaned away Shah and his followers from Farooq, reduced him to a minority in the state assembly and dismissed him on 2 July 1984. The next in-

cumbent, G M Shah, lasted as Chief Minister till 1986, when the centre removed him following communal riots in the valley's Anantnag district. In the meantime, Farooq had made peace with the Congress (I) at the centre, realizing that no one would be allowed to run a government in Kashmir unless he kowtowed to New Delhi. He struck an alliance with Congress (I), and won the 1987 elections, which were marked by widespread rigging leading to the defeat of his opponents.

Faroog's alliance with a central ruling party that had always been identified in the valley with encroachment on its autonomy, had already discredited him, while the rigging completely alienated his political opponents. The latter, particularly the youth, realizing that there was no democratic avenue open to them, increasingly drifted towards secessionist terrorism which, by the end of 1989, had begun to make its presence felt in the valley in a major way. Farooq's strong-arm measures against democratic movements like the anti-power tariff agitation in June 1988, further antagonized the common people. The appointment of Jagmohan as the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir by the National Front-ruled centre on 19 January 1990, followed by Farooq's resignation from Chief Ministership, inaugurated a process of state terrorism directed against the common people of the valley in the centre's battle with secessionist terrorism. Its escalation is relegating to the background any possibility of a restoration of the democratic process in the valley.

he Kashmir imbroglio is not a solitary aberration in Indian politics, but a typical manifestation-in an extremely violent form—of the crisis brought about by the ruling powers at the centre (irrespective of their political affiliations) due to their failure to resolve the various contradictions that fragmentize Indian society at different levels. Instead of attempting a national cohesiveness based on decentralization through equal distribution and devolution of powers among the regional units and the various ethnic and linguistic communities within these units, the centre had followed the path of integrating' them under a centralized authority. In the Indian situation, marked as it is by a complex heterogeneity, such a path is doomed to end in a cul-de-sac.

The Indian state's journey along. this blind lane begins with increasing central intrusion on regional autonomy (like dismissal of opposition ruled state governments and imposition of Presidential rule, the central ruling party's manipulation of regional politics in its favour in these states—whether in Punjab, Kashmir or Tamilnadu) and ends up with armed central intervention and repression of popular discontent that is provoked by such intrusions and manipulations. As a result, the Indian state is increasingly getting bogged down in confrontations with different types of regional aspirations and linguistic and ethnic identities. The communal and religious manifestations that they are taking on in certain areas (like the Khalistani movement in Punjab, and Islamic fundamentalism in Kashmir) bode ill for the future of secularism and democracy in India.

While pleading for an alternative structure that favours federalization through decentralization and devolution of powers, we should also take into account the social and political reality that prevails within the regional units of the Indian Union and the groups and subgroups that constitute these units. Kashmir is an interesting illustration of internal differentiations which have affected the region's political capacity to resist outside pressures. In Jammu and the valley, the Hindus have quite often tended to distance themselves from the movement for regional autonomy by claiming religious proximity to the dominant majority community of India. As a result, the movement is getting identified with Islamic fundamentalism which is displacing its original socio-cultural character. The more the local political leadership failed to bridge the gap between these various groups, the more the politicians at the centre succeeded in tightening their grip over Kashmir. Between the two of them, they have reduced the valley of flowers to a stone garden that reverberates today only with echoes of gun shots.

## Economy under siege?

ASHOK JAITLY

IT is commonly believed that as a result of the disturbed conditions in the Kashmir valley there must be considerable economic disruption and economic distress among the people. This is not quite so. While one cannot deny that there has been an impact of the militancy on economic activity, the crisis has not only demanded a deeper understanding of the basic situation and structure of the state's economy, but has also evoked certain responses which reflect the resilience and initiative of the people themselves.

The most obvious and direct impact has been on the tourism sector. During 1990 and 1991 tourism came to a virtual standstill with the total number of visitors to Kashmir falling to insignificant levels from a peak of about 7 lakhs in 1988. Surprisingly, 1989 was also a good year for the tourist trade with traffic reaching a level of 5.6 lakhs and the highest ever inflow of foreign visitors at 70,000. This was despite the fact that there had been a number of bomb blasts and killings and even an ambush on a tourist bus on its way to Gulmarg in which a woman was seriously injured by a bullet.

Towards the end of the tourist season visitors were heard commenting that they perceived a change in the mood of the people in the countryside reflecting a degree of sullenness and alienation, particularly amongst the youth. However, despite this, travel agents reported reasonably good bookings for the 1990 summer. Such a response, particularly from overseas, would suggest that tourist traffic is not as 'turmoilelastic' as is often believed. Of course, when a situation goes beyond a certain point, as it did in Kashmir in early 1990, tourism is immediately and totally affected.

There is a general, and perhaps understandable, impression that the economy of Jammu and Kashmir, and particularly that of the valley, is heavily dependent on tourism. This is part of the stereotype image of Kashmir and the Kashmiri people that has often led to serious distortions in understanding developments in the hapless vale. In macro terms, tourism contributes no more than 10 to 12% of the total net domestic state product, which is to say that almost 90% of the state product comes from sectors other than tourism. Studies and surveys conducted by the Department of Economics and Statistics, IAMR and IAER, bring out a highest possible contribution of 15%.

This should not be surprising if one looks closely at the total expenditure incurred by a tourist on travel, accommodation, food, shopping and so on. A fairly large part of this does not actually benefit the state because it is an outflow or is spent outside, as in the case of air or rail travel. It is important to appreciate this basic fact because not only does it definitively negate the 'myth of tourism' but also points to the importance of clarifying development priorities in the context of the real structure of the state's economy.

Even in terms of employment the contribution of the tourism sector is quantitatively not as impressive as is imagined and in qualitative terms often the subject of criticism, some of which is certainly well directed. Although accurate data is hard to come by, estimates place the total number of people employed directly in tourism at about 40,000. Most of the tourist activity is located in urban areas particularly in the city of Srinagar, whereas 79% of the people live and work in the rural

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areas. What is more, the bulk of the employment is low-skill and relatively low-wage, like the shikara and pony wallahs, porters, waiters, cooks (not the 'waza' type), drivers etcetera.

Further, it is also important to note that this is really seasonal employment for about 120 days in the year. In terms of sheer economic benefit to the state (as opposed to the importance of foreign exchange earnings to the country), it is a matter for consideration and debate whether the substantial public investment required for creating tourist infrastructure is commensurate with the returns considering that the government does not get any substantial revenues from the industry other than sales tax. On the other hand, in sociological terms, there are several disadvantages from a disproportionate dependence on tourism as has been experienced by countries like Nepal and Sri Lanka and even states like Goa and Kerala.

A significant benefit from tourism has been the indirect spin-off for the producer and seller of handicrafts. Again, it is presumed that every visitor to Kashmir returns with bags full of shawls, embroidered pieces, walnut wood artefacts, papier machie etcetera. Consequently, with the end of tourism, the handicrafts sector with its thousands of artisans must have also taken a beating. An expenditure survey conducted by the Department of Economics and Statistics shows that on an average 45% of the expenditure incurred by a tourist would be on purchases. Thus there has indeed been an adverse effect on the production and sale of handicrafts.

However, in order to assess the total impact it is also necessary to examine what part of the total handicrafts sales is to the visiting tourrist. Although such a statistical breakdown is not available, it is possible to infer that the bulk of handicraft sales in value terms goes in the shape of direct exports, particularly of carpets and embroideries. This has not been affected at all. On the contrary, for reasons which are not quite clear yet, the international market for carpets has been

booming in the last couple of years. Consequently, despite stiff competition from Pakistan, China, Nepal and even Mirzapur, exports of carpets from Kashmir have shown an appreciable increase. The only change that seems to have been necessitated by the disturbed conditions is that foreign buyers have not been able to visit Srinagar so easily. The centre of the export trade has therefore shifted to Delhi.

In similar fashion, the smaller handicraft merchants have shown great enterprise in taking their goods to the buyer in different parts of the country either through existing traditional trade channels or by opening new ones. Metropolitan centres like Delhi, Calcutta and Bombay have long since been familiar with the itinerant Kashmiri 'pheriwallah': his beat has now extended to Lucknow, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Bangalore and many other smaller towns. In order to provide support to the artisans and the less resourceful trader, the government also undertook a programme of special procurement of handicrafts by the State Handicrafts Corporation. These handicrafts were marketed through a series of exhibitions and 'melas' at different locations with varying degrees of success. Through these initiatives it has been possible to avert serious distress in the handicrafts sector, which accounts for about 5% of the state product.

Apart from handicrafts, the other important trading commodity for Kashmir is horticultural produce, mainly apples. Here too, despite the apprehensions of the trade and the government in the early part of 1990, there has been no serious problem and the outflow of fruits from Kashmir has been maintained (except for the decrease which came as a result of the relatively poorer crop in 1990). To compensate for the slightly lower volume, which was restored in 1991, wholesale prices in the Delhi 'mandi', where the bulk of the distribution is transacted, have been extremely favourable and the net returns to the grower have actually shown an improvement in the last two years.

Another interesting feature of the fruit trade has been that the comp-

lex network of forward contractors. commission agents and wholesale traders with their equally mysterious informal financing arrangements have remained intact during these two years even while the apparently more stable banking system has been thrown in disarray because of a series of abductions and bank robberies. Thus, age-old trade relationships involving advances and payment of vast sums of money based purely upon mutual trust have survived even the migration of non-Kashmiri businessmen from the valley, indicating the extent of financial and commercial independence and the essential viability of the traditional trade channels. We need to take a second look at the role of the much maligned middlemen in the marketing of agricultural and horticultural produce.

L his brings into focus the central issue in any examination of the dynamics of the economy of Kashmir, namely agriculture and agricultural production. What is most often not appreciated is that the backbone of the rural economy, which accounts for almost 80% of the state's population, is agriculture which, in the valley, means paddy cultivation. Equally less known is the fact that the Kashmir valley has had the highest per hectare paddy yields in the country since the mid-1960s until very recently, when productivity levels in Punjab forged ahead. This phenomenon is attributed to several factors like the early introduction of an appropriate high-yielding variety, an extensive system of irrigation through the traditional 'zamindari kuhls', the painstaking tending of his crop by the Kashmiri farmer and, above all, by the far-reaching land reforms effected in the 1950s by the first popular government after independence.

It is agriculture that provides 40% of the state product and annual fluctuations in production resulting from climatic variations like periodic droughts and floods lead to fluctuations in the overall rate of growth of the economy. For instance, in an otherwise normal and peaceful year like 1987-1988, the growth rate dropped from 3% to

-1.5% because of extensive damage to the paddy crop as a result of floods in the Kashmir valley in September 1987. On the other hand, fortunately for the people, at least nature has been kind and there have been bumper paddy crops in 1990 and 1991 to counteract the several other misfortunes experienced by them in the wake of the outbreak of militancy in January 1990. Without an appreciation of this elemental facet of the economy it becomes impossible to truly comprehend why there is not more economic hardship today.

Modern industry, whether in the large, medium or small-scale sector, has not developed to any great extent in the state which is categorized as being 'industrially backward'. Only 4% of the state product is contributed by industry which has been adversely affected to some extent in the Kashmir valley. Several of the medium-scale units in the private sector that had been set up by entrepreneurs from outside the state, have wound up their operations either because of threats from one or the other of the militant groups or because technicians and skilled labour have fled due to fear. Even the small and medium-sized factories run by local industrialists have not been able to function to anywhere near full capacity with the frequent hartals, bandhs and curfews causing considerable dislocation. Movement of raw materials and finished products is also not as smooth as required.

Perhaps the greatest handicap being faced by both industry and trade is the non-functioning of the banking system which has affected resource availability. It is estimated that industrial production and trade and business have suffered a setback of perhaps 15 to 20%.

Many analysts of the Kashmir situation have pointed to the high unemployment levels as one of the contributory factors that have driven a frustrated youth to take to the gun. This may or may not be so and points of view do differ. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that unemployment is a very serious problem, as indeed it is in many other parts of the country which are also experiencing levels of violence. Ironically, the

high level of unemployment amongst the educated (matric and above) youth, which is estimated at over 1,00,000, is accompanied by a relatively low poverty index and a shortage of unskilled and semi-skilled labour. Thus the average standard of living and the general quality of life in Kashmir has improved considerably over the year as a result of the extensive development effort.

L hose critics who have maintained that developmental investment has not been effective or has been wasted have not been able to advance any hard evidence to substantiate this charge. On the other hand, both official data, and adequate qualitaindicates that tive information only 17% of the population live below the poverty line as compared to the national average of almost 40%. Another important indicator is the fact that till the outbreak of the present disturbances there was an inflow of labour from outside for construction, industry and even agricultural operations which, in fact, had been increasing every year. Since this inflow has almost stopped in the last two years, local employment has had to respond, particularly to cope with the two bumper crops and an unexplained spurt in private construction activity.

In order to accurately assess the full impact of the disturbed conditions on the economic well-being of the people in the Kashmir valley, it would be necessary to conduct a detailed inter-sectoral analysis based upon surveys and statistical data. This has not been possible so far for obvious reasons. However, going by the information that is actually forthcoming and judging by the situation as perceived on the ground, it seems clear that the disruption in overall economic activity is not as extensive as might have been expected or as the general observer tends to conclude. It is the essential agrarian structure of the economy that has provided the people the capacity to sustain the widespread disturbances of the last two years. This also indicates that economic policy and development strategy need careful consideration and a new direction rather than to continue to follow conventional and stereotyped mindsets.

## The militant viewpoint

SHIRAZ SIDHVA

THERE has been a firing at Hyderpora, and the boys who attacked a picket of the Border Security Force (BSF) are sweating despite the cold. Only hours ago they had attended the funeral of one of their friends at Nowpora, in the downtown area. According to Nasir, who fired at the BSF guards (his three shots all missed), this latest action by the Kashmiri militants was not an act of violence, only just retribution. They were disappointed though, that no retribution had been achieved. All that had happened was that the army and the CRPF had joined the BSF guards in hot pursuit of the attackers. Militants were seldom apprehended-often, it was some innocent civilian who paid with his or her life. And the newspapers the next day would crow about two or three 'dreaded militants' being gunned down.

As the current phase of the Kashmir crisis enters its third year, the government in New Delhi realizes that militancy is not going to disappear on its own from the valley. And yet, they are fond of placating the rest of the country and the world by claiming every once in a while that militancy is on the wane, that people are 'fed up' of the militants, and that it will only be a matter of months before things normalize in the valley. Unfortunately, those of us who visit the beleaguered state regularly, know that this is wishful thinking. Certainly, the people are fed up of living in a war zone, and would like nothing better than for some semblance of normalcy to return, but it is not the militants they blame for the sorry mess in Kashmir, it is the Indian state.

Today, it is too late for them to withdraw support to the militants, who they consider their own 'boys'. The army and paramilitary forces are not based in the valley in large numbers to protect the populace from trigger-happy terrorists, as is

made out. They play the role of an occupying force to ensure that Kashmir remains a part of India. As a result, it is no exaggeration to say that the alienation of the people is one hundred per cent—there is probably not a single individual left in the valley who does not feel that independence for Kashmir is the only way out.

And yet, most Kashmiris realize that azaadi is not around the corner, as they had believed when they took to the streets in those heady days that followed the release of five militants in exchange of Rubaiya Sayeed, the then Home Minister's daughter. That was mid-December 1989, when lakhs of men, women and children poured into the streets, singing revolutionary songs, burning rubber tyres, and bursting firecrackers in the warrens of downtown Kashmir. For three long days and nights, there was rejoicing, not for the release of the Home Minister's daughter, but for the freedom of their boys from prison.

Leaders of the popular Jammu' and Kashmir Liberation Front admit that they had only four Kalashnikov rifles (AK-47s) in their possession when they kidnapped Rubaiya. Today, there must be literally thousands of this deadly weapon in the valley. The V P Singh government had been in power barely a week when the crisis in Kashmir erupted in its face. Punjab was a predictable trouble spot, and one of the first things the new Prime Minister did was to rush to the Golden Temple on a conciliatory visit. Kashmir had been on slow simmer for a few months, but few paid any heed to the rantings of what they thought was a small group of trouble-mongers who had been raising slogans for independence in the valley, intermittently for the last 40 years.

If the central government was taken completely unawares by the kidnapping of the daughter of a senior Cabinet Minister, they were even more flummoxed by the jubilation that followed. Perhaps the Kashmiris would have returned to their homes and gone about their business in a few weeks had the centre not taken the extreme step of imposing Jagmohan as Governor. They had been warned by the Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah that he would resign were this to happenbut there were people in V P Singh's cabinet who felt that they knew best how to deal with trouble in Kashmir -Kashmiris like Mufti Mohammed Sayeed (whose induction as Home Minister was widely accepted as having been a sop to the Muslims) and Arun Nehru who had played pernicious roles in Kashmir politics in the past.

In less than a month, Kashmir had been deserted by its elected government, and had at its helm, a man who insisted he was there to administer 'a healing touch', but started instead, to turn Kashmir into a veritable killing field. Obviously, the Governor thought that things had not changed very much since the days he distinguished himself in the valley by lighting up the Boulevard or literally paving the way to the Vaishno Devi shrine.

As the death toll mounted and the security forces fired indiscriminately to disperse the mobs that thronged the streets every second week, more and more youth in the valley had little recourse but to take to the gun. Obviously delighted by the sudden turn of events, Pakistan pulled out all the stops to aid and abet the large mass of unemployed youth in the valley. There were hectic attempts made by the two main militant groups to recruit new blood into the movement-militant outfits mushroomed overnight, with self-styled leaders taking over as commanders-in-chief and framing a diktat a day.

The two main groups which had a base in the valley, the JKLF and the Hizb-ul Mujahideen (HM), the militant wing of the pro-Pakistani Jamaat-i-Islami, found that their movement was being swamped with new outfits every day, with new laws to terrorize anyone who dared to disagree with them. An outfit which called itself the Allah Tigers went

about smashing Srinagar's bars, closing down cinema halls, video parlours and beauty parlours, saying that they were un-Islamic. It was decreed that all women would wear the burqa, and dress according to Islamic tradition.

It was to be expected that the minority Hindu population that had coexisted peacefully with the Muslims for hundreds of years, felt threatened by this sudden veering to fundamentalism by some of the Pakistani-sponsored groups. The flow of arms across the border and the sudden spurt of militant activity to retaliate against Jagmohan's repressive regime forced thousands of Kashmiris, both Hindu and Muslim, to flee the valley.

Lt was never easy, but always possible for visiting journalists to set up meetings with the militants. As the movement gained momentum with each passing massacre in the first half of 1990, militants would, sometimes materialize in the streets and accost journalists, claiming that they were leaders of some sundry group or the other. It was up to the visitor to ensure that the men with guns (almost everybody had a gun in a matter of months, and there was a constant flow of boys to training camps across the border) were indeed authorized or qualified to speak on behalf of the militant organization they claimed to represent.

There was little room for doubt about the importance of the man who sat calmly in a well-appointed living room in downtown Srinagar. Surrounded by a clutch of boys who had their faces covered with handkerchieves and their hands on AK-47s, Ishfaq Majid Wani seemed too gentle to fit into the popular perception of a dreaded militant. Already, the local press had gone to town about how Wani, the top JKLF leader, had personally ensured the safety of Rubaiya Sayeed in captivity, and how he had personally arranged for video films to keep her entertained. 'Call me Imtiaz,' said the large man with the soft brown eyes. He talked about how he, like a number of his colleagues in the JKLF, had been students in 1987. campaigning for the Muslim United Front (MUF) before the crucial elections that year. Wani recalled the stunned shock that followed the declaration of the results—this was a unique form of rigging. The MUF had grossed the maximum votes when the counting was done, but it was Farooq Abdullah's National Conference that was declared the winner.

The JKLF leaders, many of them across the border in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, and still others in Europe, had waited for an opportunity like this, since the hanging of their martyred leader, Maqbool Butt, in 1984. The blatant rigging of the 1987 elections was the last straw in a bleak scenario for Kashmiri youth. In his last years, the Lion of Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah, had succumbed to the temptation of allowing his wife (it was rumoured the Begum actually sat and counted the notes to ensure that the bribe was what it was purported to be) to accept capitation fees for entrance into professional colleges—those who could not pay had to abandon their dreams of becoming doctors or engineers.

Jobs had never been easy to getit was a long-standing grouse that the minority Kashmiri pandits (Hindus), who were more educated and better connected, usurped all the central government jobs, and the funds allocated to Kashmir by the centre had long been appropriated to line the pockets of a bandful of families in the state. In a situation where there were no jobs, and sometimes not even a chance to train for a decent profession, it was easy for the power-brokers across the border to lure the youth with the promise of freedom and the glamour of the gun.

Few Kashmiri militants are as committed or as sensible as Ishfaq Majid Wani was. He dreamt of a Kashmir that would prosper like Switzerland, land-locked by friendly neighbours, India and Pakistan. He insisted that Kashmir was never a part of India, and that Nebru had promised a plebiscite in 1953, a promise that the country should have honoured. Kashmiri militancy was about freedom, not fundamentalism, he assured us, and the exodus of Kashmiri pandits that was just be-

ginning, was entirely uncalled for. He had no answer for the scores of other smaller groups that would get out of hand as time went by, but he was clearly worried about their existence.

L he JKLF, like the other groups, were aided by Pakistan in the early days. Their logic was simple: though they had no inclination to accede to or be part of that country, they were only too willing to accept help from anyone who provided it, in order to better fight the enemy. Academic questions about how they intended to survive as a separate economic entity were azaadi ever granted them, would invariably draw an angry response that they would cross the bridge when they came to it. Nothing angered Wani more than the accusations that the pandits were being driven out by militants who were fighting for a pan-Islamic state. The JKLF, he stubbornly maintained, would ensure that all their Hindu brothers would happily coexist in an independent Kashmir; he wondered why they did not join in the struggle for independence, when in their heart of hearts they wanted azaadi too.

Ishfaq Majid Wani may have had a utopian vision for his home state, but a grenade blast ended all that at the end of March 1990 (his interview to Sunday was the last he gave). His successor, Javed Ahmed Mir had none of the stature or vision of Wani, but necessity would ensure that he would soon acquire it.

In stark contrast, Nasir-ul Islam in early 1991, who headed a breakaway faction of the HM, swears that Kashmir's salvation lies only in being a part of Pakistan. 'Our objective is to get independence for Islam. We want to be part of the Islamic bloc,' the leader told Sunday in March 1991. Did that mean they were fighting for Kashmir's accession to Pakistan? 'If Pakistan accepts our Islamic atmosphere, we are with them.' But he hastens to add that this is a political insurgency, not a religious one. He has no objection to his outfit being termed fundamental. 'A fundamentalist is a real Muslim,' he declares. 'Our mission is to Islamise the whole universe as God has ordered us.'

Fortunately for Kashmir, the majority of the people do not share these sentiments. Which is why the JKLF has the maximum support in the valley, even at a time when the pro-Independence organization is out in the cold as far as funds and support from Pakistan are concerned. Salim Nanaji, who is currently in the Hiranagar jail in Jammu, typifies the young boys that have joined the JKLF fold. In the early months of last year, the 23-year-old engineering graduate officiated as Acting Commander-in-Chief of the JKLF when Javed Mir was across the border. Joining the separatist organization in 1988, he is convinced, even as he sits in jail, that India will have to sooner or later, give up Kashmir. 'There can never be any talks within the framework of the Indian Constitution, because it simply doesn't exist for us,' he insisted, in an interview to Sunday in March 1991. 'People will finally realize that we are not about to give up our struggle.

Salim's words are echoed by his comrades, a year later. Posing for a photograph in the snow, with a little boy holding a toy gun (it is ironic that little children in Kashmir still love toy guns, considering they are constantly surrounded by the real thing), Javed Ahmed Mir does not hide his resentment at the recent Pakistani action against Kashmiris on the other side of the border who attempted to storm the line of actual control. We are going to fight India to the last,' he says. 'And if the need arises, we will fight both India and Pakistan.'

Pakistan is over, even for the militants belonging to the pro-Pakistani groups like the HM. Now that it is clear to them that Pakistan, like India, is nowhere near accepting the possibility of an independent Kashmir, even the Jamaat activists are not sure whether their unholy alliance with Pakistan is such a good thing. 'This is not terrorism or fundamentalism, this is a genuine movement for freedom, and we are only echoing the aspirations of the peoplc,' insists Zain-ul Abidin (an assumed name) the spokesman for the JKLF. 'The people are with us, and we will fight to the very last for azaadi.

Governor Girish Chandra Saxena is fond of telling the press about the citizens who have come and complained to him that they are fed up of the boys, who come and demand fancy meals of chicken every now and then. True, the housewives in Rainawari (a militant stronghold before the BSF flushed out and occupied the area) did complain that they were harassed by the boys with constant demands of food and tea. But, as one senior citizen in the area put it, 'We'd rather give all our dinner to the boys and complain, than have the army kill our children and humiliate us.' Fortunately the criminalization of the militancy in Kashmir is as yet containable by the major groups; the time has not yet come when the militants have become trigger-happy like their counterparts clsewhere.

Even the Governor admits that a third of the trained militants in Kashmir are inactive—that does not necessarily prove that they have given up the gun, rather that they have not reached a point when they are willing to kill wantonly. 'When was the last time you heard of our boys massacring people in the streets, or pulling them off a train or a bus and shooting them, like in other parts of the country?' asks a senior doctor involved in the separatist movement. Nobody is denying that Kashmiri militants have killed hundreds of people since the movement snowballed in 1989, and few can condone that. But the majority of the militants are a far cry from the bloodthirsty killers they are made out to be. Often they mourn the death of a security man they killed in the area, and it is precisely this sort of remorse that should be capitalized upon by anyone seeking a solution to the Kashmir crisis.

It will be a long time before the people turn against the militants as is being made out by the government. And the sooner the government stops deluding themselves about this, the better. For the moment, the militants are widely regarded by the people as their 'boys' bravely fighting an awesome occupying force. And they are determined that some day they will win.

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## Militancy: a comment

D. N. KAUL

HERE is a snatch of conversation:

Time: An evening on a day in the last week of May 1964.

Setting: A very sumptuously furnished drawing room in the President's House in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Scated on adjacent sofas are President General Mohammed Ayub Khan of Pakistan and Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah.

SMA: So General Sahib, you have totally rejected the plan of bringing about a confederation of India, Pakistan and Kashmir. That

plan would have enabled us to get a release from the Indian strang-lehold. What other way is left to us? A sustained armed struggle of the type Algerians organized against the French? We are prepared for it. Would you be able to help us with arms, ammunition, explosives and other war materials?

AK: That shouldn't be difficult, Sheikh Sahib. The line of actual control is vulnerable and sneaking in war materials into J & K should not pose any insuperable problem. But where are the Algerians?

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This anecdote did the rounds in Srinagar on Sheikh Sahib's return from Pakistan and after his participation in Nehru's funeral and other attendant rites. Nobody can vouch for the truthfulness of the Sheikh-Ayub conversation. It could be true; it could be apocryphal. In any case, it sounds plausible, for the overall impression about Kashmiris has been that they are a meek, non-violent people who shirk almost instinctively from killing others with firearms.

The question then arises: how, within seven years of the great Sheikh's demise, did the rumblings of armed insurgency against the establishment in Srinagar and Delhi start, and how have these been sustained without a noticeable diminution in virulence and merciless, aggressive character? Does it imply that an ostensibly meek Kashmiri, or any other person for that matter, can adopt an uncompromisingly militant attitude given the necessary motivation?

Many explanations of the insurgency in Kashmir have been attempted, some of which have been authored by our pseudo-intellectuals. (There are hardly any intellectuals in Srinagar, notwithstanding the establishment of a University there. The city is politically obsessed and detached intellectualism cannot flourish in such an ambience.) The etiology of the trouble has been traced to the promise of a plebiscite by Nehru to the people of Kashmir in 1947. Thence onwards, various events, like the dismissal of Sheikh Abdullah, the emergence of the Democratic National Conference, the rigging of the election in 1989, and other allied factors have been adduced in support of the various theses.

To me this approach seems too facile and simplistic. For a true and correct appraisal of the Kashmir militant outburst, we have to look for parallels in other parts of the world where similar situations developed. Let us examine the Iranian Revolution. A superficial explanation of the Khomeini phenomenon is that it was a religious revival, a return to and a resurrection of what has been characterized as fundamen-

talism. In fact the present armed insurrection in Kashmir has also displayed in a strident fashion a communal and fundamentalist aspect.

In Iran, we may recall, in the days of the Shah, arms imports from the USA started on a massive scale. Small and big, sophisticated and complex weapons were being supplied from the USA with a large number of local contractors involved in this import racket. The politicians and the ruling classes also had their fingers in the pie. This led to the burgeoning forth of a big class of the nouveau riche.

It is a matter of common observation that the nouveau riche flaunt an ersatz culture whose chief characteristics are a vulgar display of crude and low taste in dress, in style of living, in houses and in the general way of conduct and bearing. This newly sprung class of rich men in and around Tehran started living glitzy lives with Western-style ball room dancing. Women's dresses shrank in length, while neck-lines plunged downwards. Men went about in limousines in snazzy dresses. The emergence of this pattern of living naturally widened the gulf between the rich and the poor. The class cleavage became sharper and unbridgeable.

Here we must pause to contemplate the overall nature of Eastern societies. These are basically conservative, with a religious ethos. This basic feature lends a religious tint to even economic and political divides. In fact most percipient Eastern revolutionaries have adopted the religious idiom and approach to politico-economic problems to ensure mass appeal.

Take the case of Gandhi. His entire approach was religious. He spoke in terms of Ram Rajya and fasting and through prayer meetings and what have you. This redoubled his appeal to a mass of people who were and are deeply religious and pseudo-other worldly. Swami Vivekanand said that he hated politics like poison. He wanted to woo Daridranarayana with religious piety. He declared that the lot of the wretched in India could be improved by the religious way only.

Against this ethical and mental background the class conflict in Iran, accentuated by the emergence of the nouveau riche on the scene, assumed a religious character. The life-style of the rich was characterized as un-Islamic. Every manner of hedonism is patently anti-religious. So the economic class hatred of the rich becomes a religious crusade against not only the vulgar and irreligious rich, but takes in its sweep those institutions, including the ruling establishment, which bring about this cleavage and create the artificial anti-people class. Khomeini just took advantage of this widespread revolt.

he story of India's handling of Kashmir has been no different. What India practised in Kashmir right from 1947 was not realpolitik. Far from that. A new philosophy was evolved and the modus operandi of its implementation was to buy off a people by giving them abosulute liberty to be corrupt and thus suffuse them with money. It was a new version of a pact with Mephistophles at a national level. As should have been anticipated, the experiment, a politico-sociological one. was bound to fail and come home to roost. The moral lesson of India's religious history, reoriented and refurbished by Gandhi-that means are more important than the endswas conveniently and effortlessely jettisoned for expediency.

A basically correct and upright policy was never adopted. In order to sustain this expedient approach, one evil led to another. When corrupting people didn't meet the ephemeral ends, elections were sought to be rigged. This happened even in the regime of Sadiq who was supposed to be an epitome of rectitude. Fourteen nomination papers in Anantnag were rejected with one flourish of the DC's pen. This made R N Vaishnav, one of the candidates, shout in the DC's court 'So far I believed in God, I am now convinced that He does not exist.'

The Indian approach of completely loosening the purse-strings not only destroyed a whole generation's value system, but also led to the rise of a nouveau riche class, almost a

doleful parallel to what happened in Iran. This class built houses—behold the constructions in New Raj Bagh—with garish, coloured tiles making up their facade. These are not houses meant to be lived in; they are monuments to the owners' phenomenal success in garnering lucre from the ubiquitous Indian munifiscence. A general vulgarity of approach and brashness began characterizing the mien of this section of society. This unmistakably led to the accentuation of the class conflict.

Rumblings against this new class and its ersatz and artificial culture could be heard all over the city. Disgust with the establishment went on accumulating, inevitably acquiring a religious raiment. A fight against Western values and ways of life naturally led to a cry for the revival of the old Islamic values of austerity and feminine modesty and a spartan way of life and character. It is but natural that when a movement starts, though it starts against a section, it soon becomes a mass movement which wants to overhaul the system that creates imbalances and lopsidedness. The poor Kashmiri pandit got involved because he was held to be a chip of the establishment which was perpetrating this injustice and devilry.

It is not my intention to justify the militancy in Kashmir. Far from it. There is, however, a need for a rational and detached appraisal of it which would include its inevitability. Henrik Ibsen said that ideals betrayed have a terrible and unsparing way of wreaking vengeance. What is happening in Kashmir is a gory version of what Ibsen observed. Our national motto is: Truth alone lives. What does it mean? Perhaps. from what we have been observing, it means that what lives automatically becomes the truth. Is that too cynical? Someone, somewhere, should ponder over all this.

After the insurgency is quelled—it will be sooner than we imagine—a new approach will need to be forged. In this context mention must be made of a word which is being bandied about these days. The word is 'Kashmiriat'. M. J. Akbar begins his book Kashmir: Behind the

Vale with an elucidation of the term. He says that Kashmiriat means the culture of an average Kashmiri which has been fashioned out of the compounding of Lal Ded's Shaivite philosophy and Nund Rishi's Sufism. I don't want to take issue with Akbar, but if Kashmiriat were a part of our mental and ethical make-up, why did it disappear with the appearance of a gun on a fellow Kashmiri's shoulder? Was this Kashmiriat superficial, thinner than even a veneer?

Unlture is the co-efficient of the socio-economic atmosphere and ambience in a people. The Kashmiriat supposed to have been fashioned by the Vaks and Tooks existed before the 14th century when the two saints flourished. The humility and fellowfeeling were the products of abject poverty, not of Shaivisam and Sufism. I remember Sheikh Sahib telling me on one of his fireside evenings how, when he was young, no one drank and people were generally more straightforward. I said that this attitudinal pattern was the result of poverty and not of principles moral or religious. I told him that the number of liquor shops and their sales in Srinagar in his regime was phenomenal. Even these days, when liquor shops are closed, the aqua-vita is beings smuggled into Kashmir, for sale of the stuff in Jammu has doubled. Perhaps even the militants need the fluid to acquire Dutch courage.

The so-called Kashmiriat was thus bound to vanish with affluence. The social relationships and their pattern changed completely in England with the onset of industrial culture. Of course, affluence doesn't always mean brashness and rudeness, characteristics of present Kashmiri culture. But it takes three generations to produce a gentleman. Perhaps we shall have fine gentlemen stalking the Srinagar streets in 2050 AD. People who lament the disappearance of Kashmiriat are displaying their ignorance of the decline and evolution of cultures. Sir Owen Dixon, the UN mediator found the Kashmiris to be of weak moral spine. It is such people who, in changed situations, can become inhumanly cruel. Cowardice is ultimately the obverse of cruelty.

### A constricted discourse

HARSH SETHI

THE recent release of the Press Council report (June 1991)), 'Crisis and Credibility' by K Vikram Rao and BG Verghese, marks a new turn in the literature on human rights in the country. This is probably the first time that situation reports by human rights groups have been challenged, not by the officialdom or even sections of the mainstream media, which is routine, but by a widely respected body constituted to uphold the freedom of the press and also by association, fundamental human rights in the country. As such it raises afresh issues regarding not just the veracity and authenticity of the specific allegations made by the HRGs, but the very presuppositions of such activity.

Barring the brief honeymoon that the human rights world enjoyed in the years immediately following the Emergency (1975-77), most of their recent ventures have met a dismal fate. Be it the reports on Arwal or encounter deaths in Andhra, the best-selling 'Who Are the Guilty', the reports on Meerut, Malliana or Bhagalpur—each of them have faced a hostile reception. While some of these have been commended for their courage and timely warnings against state excesses, the general reading has been that the HRGs 'bend over backwards' to prove their radicalism. And this radicalism seems to consist of a 'gleeful and malicious' state bashing, of 'proving' that the law and order machinery is not only excessively violent but is invariably biased against the minorities and the weak; that the social base of Hindu communalism has grown to alarming proportions; that terrorist and militant violence is almost 'excusable' in the face of state terrorism, and so on.<sup>1</sup>

Even in more 'normal times' such a reading would cause grave disquiet. And these days, with the country virtually under siege by a variety of forces, both internal and external, mainstream patience with dissenters who do not even share the prime value of the 'unity and integrity' of the country is expectedly low. More so when talking about regions where a beleagured state is attempting to counter insurgent movements, as in Kashmir.

For the last year and a half, reports of increasing, gross and systematic violations of the fundamental human rights of the population of the Kashmir valley have been gathering storm. From the March 1990 report 'India's Kashmir War' by the Committee for Initiative on Kashmir, to the latest JKLF deposition in front of the UN Sub-Commission on Human Rights, activists and media personnel have charged the Indian state of virtually handing over the valley to para-military and

<sup>1.</sup> In the context of the current Kashmir crisis, readers are invited to look at the editorials in the leading dallies during March-April 1990 and June 1991. For a contrary view see 'Mid-Summer Madness over Human Rights', Sumanta Banerjee, EPW, 2 June, 1990.

military authorities. They argue that in a state which has been under central rule for over two-and-a-half years, the passage of the Disturbed Areas Act to cover the entire valley has led to a situation that permits no redressal in the face of continuous harassment, arrests, torture, killing, molestation and rape of women, looting and burning of property etcetera by the security forces.

ot unexpectedly, such charges have been routinely denied by the authorities, dismissed at best as illinformed and malicious and at worst as conscious propaganda designed to weaken the country, its resolve to maintain its integrity, and help its enemies win the international propaganda war. Bewildered and squeezed somewhere in between is the ordinary reader, not knowing whom to trust or believe. But as the insurgent opposition shows little signs of flagging out, reports on violations continue to multiply, and the government now under greater international pressure to safeguard human rights (possibly as part of new conditionalities governing multilateral aid) has even had to permit the British shadow foreign secretary, Kaufman, to make an on-the-spot assessment, the credibility of these denials is no longer as convincing. It is in such a context that the Press Council report raises fresh and disturbing questions about the construction and reading of human rights reports.

The Press Council is an honourable body, and Verghese is an honourable man. His credibility as a liberal democrat, periodically taking stands not welcomed by the establishment, remains high. Even in the context of Kashmir, he has recently been in the limelight for dismissing as 'fabrication and propaganda' the widespread belief about the destruction of Hindu temples in the valley. So when he, on behalf of the Press Council, argues that: 'The Committee is firmly of the view that reports of human rights excesses against the Indian Army in Kashmir have been grossly exaggerated or invented. Some excesses have taken place, but these have been inquired into and action taken against those found guilty (para 335), then we do require to take a closer look at the construction of the human rights reports.

The Committee further argues: 'Most of the charges levelled against the army are anecdotal and not properly investigated. Human rights organizations and the media play a valuable watchdog role but have an obligation to be far more rigorous in piecing together information and publishing what might pass for hard findings. The mere say-so of alleged victims and propagandists can only be treated as such and suggest a cause for inquiry, no more' (para 351). At the end, the Committee actually exonerates the army: 'The Indian Army has broken new ground in taking a bold decision to throw open its human rights record to public scrutiny through the Press Council of India. Few armies in the world would invite such an inquiry. The Indian Army has cooperated in this task. And it has, all things considered, emerged with honour' (para 352).

Warm praise indeed! Particularly after what is now well documented about the Indian Army's role in Nagaland and Mizoram. Or maybe counter-insurgency operations in India operate differently from the way the French operated in Algeria, or the US Army in Vietnam. So are we then to believe that all is well in the Kashmir valley? Of course the situation there is miserable. Between the writ of the scores of militant groups and the counter-insurgency operations of the Indian state, a daily kill rate exceeding 15, dusk to dawn curfew, a near complete collapse of the economy, civil services and the administration, the lot of the citizens of the valley cannot be particularly pleasurable. But at least our security forces, fighting a difficult 'war' amidst an alienated if not hostile populace are 'playing the game' according to rules. So instead of carping, we actually ought to be commending them!

This brief comment is not an attempt to go into the facticity of the charges and defence. Nor does it attempt to reconstruct once again the long and troubled history of the region to provide a framework for understanding the growth of alienation and militancy which has brou-

ght things to the current impasse. And to be fair to the Press Council sub-committee, it does argue that: 'The answer to the human rights issue however is ultimately not better information systems or denotification of special laws, but a steady and early withdrawal from the army's aid-to-civil-power role. Aid to civil power may be necessary at any given time and for a time, but is unhealthy if prolonged. Administrative, political and development options need to be simultaneously pursued alongside maintenance of law and order. Pakistan's intervention is a complicating factor. But this is the con-sequence and not the cause of troubles in Kashmir. The real remedy lies within' (para 349). Rather. the attempt is to outline some general considerations in the writing and reading of such reports, an elucidation of the presuppositions behind such exercises.

The business of human rights reports is to expose and lay bare the darker aspects in the making of our state and society. At the primary level they are expected to expose the lawlessness of our legal apparatus. At a deeper level they help question the legitimacy of the laws themselves. Such an activity will necessarily embarrass the government and the state. It may even be used by inimical forces. But HRGs cannot legitimately be expected to internalise the values and norms of the state. Their business is to dissent and thus push both state and society into structures, processes, norms and values of greater accountability and fairness.

But while their role per se cannot be questioned, that is, if we do see ourselves as a civilized democracy, their actual functioning and how their activities are read and understood is highly context dependent. And nowhere does the thin dividing line between struggling for greater decency and being destructively fissiparous come under greater strain than in situations like the one that obtains in Kashmir.

The two reports by the Committee for Initiative on Kashmir, 'India's Kashmir War' (March 1990) and 'Kashmir Imprisoned' (July 1990), as also its monthly 'Kashmir

Dossier' are extremely valuable documents. At a time when the mainstream media had all but abdicated its role in the valley, and all we had were official handouts, activists of the committee, at considerable risk and at their own cost did go to the valley to report on what was going on. For far more than the listing of specific allegations of excesses and misdemeanours, the two reports provide a graphic account of how the populace in the valley was feeling and thinking. What the reports should have led to is a serious debate on both the situation in the valley and our Kashmir policy.

Unfortunately, they did neither. Partly because of the obtaining external environment, partly because of the space Kashmir occupies in our collective sub-conscious, and partly because of the internal construction of the reports, the ensuing debate (if it can be called that) ended up by focusing more on the credentials of the HRGs themselves. It does seem unlikely that popular consciousness, in coming to terms with what it perceives as fundamentalist and terrorist separatism in a Muslim-majority province bordering Pakistan, will view with any favour accounts that detail the 'horrors' unleashed by the administration in dealing with an explosive situation with a firm hand. More so if the accounts accuse not just the administration and the police but also the para-military and the army of indulging in excessive and illegal violence with a communal bias.

Any analysis of Kashmir that minimizes if not ignores the reality of Pakistan's involvement in the valley, that shows poor understanding of the implications of the global resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism, that views terrorism and militancy only as a societal response to state terrorism and is insensitive to its simultaneous autonomous roots is asking us to live in a world of make-believe. Any commentary that cannot squarely face up to the inability of the organized groups in the valley (120 by the latest count) to retain even part of the miniscule non-Muslim or 'Indian nationalist' minority in their ranks, or continues to see the mass out-migration of the pandit community only/primarily as

a part of the state strategy, stands on a shifty moral terrain when accusing the state and society of being Hindu communal. And on these counts the human rights reports do stand on weak ground.<sup>8</sup>

But what of the detailing of daily life under regular curfew, of the disruption and harassment caused by cordon and search operations, of the many 'civilians' caught between the cross-fire between the militants and the security forces? Or what of the innumerable charges of harassment, detention, torture, rape, looting, arson and killing-all made easier under special laws? To argue, as the mainstream media has done, that these reports are pro-militant, only shows that they have either not been read or ignored. For 'Kashmir Imprisoned has long sections on how the militants are causing untold hardships to the ordinary citizen. The fact that many of them are still seen as preferable to the security forces is only a reflection of the 'regard' that the latter are held in. And this notwithstanding the steady criminalization of many of the militant groups.

The Verghese committee response to these and other reports by groups such as Amnesty International and Asia Watch has been somewhat disappointing. While no one could expect the committee to go into the genesis of the Kashmir problem or recommend possible solutions towards restoring 'normality', one had not quite expected it to take up, as vociferously as it has, the role of defending the army's honour or of exposing the anti-India international conspiracy spearheaded by Pakistan.

And this comes through sharply in the language employed when discussing the respective roles of the security forces and the HRGs.

When discussing the former, the constant refrain is for us to understand the extremely trying circumstances the security forces have to operate in: the terrain, climate, hostile population, living under threat of an 'enemy' that respects no rules and conventions; the difficulty in neutralizing an enemy aided from across the border etcetera. Hardly a word about the 'state of horror' that the ordinary populace lives in when squeezed between militants and an 'alien' (non-Kashmiri) army, with little sensitivity for local feelings. So the excesses, and a few are indeed grudgingly admitted, should at least be understandable, if not actually condoned!

It is indeed amazing that a firm opponent of the Emergency (1975-77) should argue, when it comes to Kashmir, that 'Abuse of special laws ultimately depends more on the attitude of the uniformed force employed than on their inherent stringency' (para 159). Obviously, the blanket denunciation of such laws by the civil liberties movement has been misplaced! And what in any case is one to expect of the 'attitude of the uniformed force'-non-Kashmiri, often non-Muslim' hyped up about saving the country at any cost, itself under strain, and assured that under the special laws it cannot easily be held accountable for any misdemeanours.

A look at Annexure 32 which lists Army Court Martials from April 1990 to July 1991 is revealing. The annexure lists a total of seven court martials which have so far been conducted involving eight officers, three JCOs, one NCO and one jawan. For charges involving robbery, illegal detention, torture to death in custody, outraging the modesty of a woman, and killing civilians in unwarranted cross-firing, the punishments awarded are 'severe displeasure recorded' and 'promotion stalled'. Only in one case is it indicated that the services of an officer may be terminated. Not a single case has been handed over to the civilian authorities to be tried under

<sup>2.</sup> For a view that sharply attacks the HRGs for their accusation that the Jagmohan administration activley encouraged the Kashmiri pandit exodus from the valley, see 'My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir, Jagmohan, Allied Publishers. 1991, in particular Ch XIII. 'Frightened Pigeons and Forsaken Community'. If one is able to somehow surmount Jagmohan's 'hurt innocence' and self-defence, he does paint a demanding indictment of the lack of professionalism and pre-conceived bias of human rights activists Instead of cross-checking their facts and providing substantiable evidence, they seem more keen to denigrate Jagmohan by Innuendo. Interestingly, till the time of writing this note, none of the parties Jagmohan accuses of slander have bothered to refute his charge.

the Cr. P.C. Given this track record, about which the committee has no comments, one wonders what restraint the services would operate under, or to what degree the allegedly affected populace would repose confidence in the justice they would receive.<sup>3</sup>

It cannot be denied that many of the specific allegations made by HRGs are poorly formulated, vague, and difficult to substantiate if ever examined by a court of law. Not that many of them are ever put to the due process. It is also not inconceivable that many of them may be unwarranted, if not concocted for purposes of malicious counter-propaganda. The Verghese committee examines four specific allegations, two involving mass rape and two involving unwarranted firing leading to deaths, levelled against the armed forces. In all four cases, it dismisses the charges as unfounded.4

As a lay reader it is not possible to ascertain the truth of the allegations. But the mode of argumentation used by the Verghese

committee does reveal its bias. In the instance of firing by the security forces leading to civilian deaths at the Tengpura by-pass on the outskirts of Srinagar on 1 March, 1990 (p. 9, India's Kashmir War), the real allegation was that the firing was unnecessary and excessive. The army had at that stage rebutted the charge, arguing that firing had to be resorted to in self-defence, since a hostile mob had attacked a school bus. The HRG had countered this by arguing that 'local people whom we interviewed dismissed the inquiry report as blatantly false, since all the schools in the valley were closed at the time for winter holidays. Besides, there was no army school anywhere near the spot the firing took place.'

The Verghese committee notes that no army school was indeed functioning at that time. 'But in the Tengpura incident, the allegation against the army must fall since the charge has been sought to be negatively substantiated on the ground that the army's statement about protecting a school bus was concocted, since schools were not in session and there is no army school near Tengpura. The school exists and was in session' (p. 292).

On reading this argument one is forced to wonder what exactly is at issue; the fact whether a school was open at that time or whether the firing was excessive and unwarranted. Of course, the HRG has been clearly shown up as insept, for not checking out its facts. But the same report also records the statement of an eye-witness, Md. Aslam, who charges the security forces for shooting unarmed and peaceful demonstrators in cold blood. Also, is it not strange that all the eight bullets fired led to deaths? No injuries?

Further, what of the statement in the HRG report that 'the government ordered registration of cases against the erring military personnel involved'. The least one would have expected the Verghese committee to have done is to go into greater details of the incident, even though enquiries 15 months after the incident serve little purpose. At the end, all the committee has been able to do is to show up the lack of pro-

fessionalism of the HRG, not really make any of us wiser about the 'unwarranted excesses', if any, in the handling of the situation.

It is this shifting of focus that needs explanation. Also the bland acceptance of all army statements as true by the Verghese committee. In no case is the reader aware of any cross-examining of army statements as was carried out of the men and women who claimed to be victims of army excesses. For instance, in the highly publicised case of 'alleged mass rape' at Kunan-Poshpora on 23-24 February 1991, the committee has gone into great details to expose the contradictions in the allegations. But, even when it admits that a few cases of molestation or even rape may have taken place, it does little to find out the actual fate of the enquiry ordered by the Divisional Commissioner. Months after the incident, no official report is as yet out. How then can ordinary citizens have faith in the redressal and justice machinery?

If anything, the Kunan-Poshpora incident reveals that if various HRGs were guilty of blowing up what in that context may have been a 'minor incident', into a major international scandal without preparing their case thoroughly, and thus inadvertently or otherwise strengthening anti-India propaganda, the Verghese committee too has erred in focusing all its ire on the negative implications of such motivated propaganda. While its warning to HRGs or its elucidation of the possible misuse of reports of violations needs to be well taken, that after all cannot be the prime purpose of a human rights investigation.

Even if we go along with the committee's finding that the Kuincident 'stands nan-Poshpora totally unproven and completely untrue, a dirty trick to frame the army and get it to lay off Kunan-Poshpora which is precisely what it has done' (para 264), the language that it employs to dismiss the account of the alleged victims is, to put it mildly, unaesthetic. When commenting upon the 'rape victims', it adds, 'As for torn hymen, this could be the result of natural factors, injury, premarital sex, or rape' (para 203).

<sup>3.</sup> One of the issues on which the Verghese committee has been castigated, and rightly so, is its wilful neglect in examining complaints against the para-military forces. To argue, as it does, that this was not part of its mandate; that they looked at the army's role only because of a specific request by army authorities, is unconvincing. More so, as B M Sinha points out (Mainstream, 7 September, 1991), in para 338 of the report, Verghese et. al. did take the para-military into their consideration. Alas, as Balraj Puri points out (The Illustrated Weekly of India, 28 September-4 October, 1991), it is the paramilitary rather than the army that the civilian populace comes into more regular contact with. So, the claim at one level that the committee is looking at the operations of all security forces, and then to make comments only on the army seems an underhand way to whitewash or slide over the alleged para-military atrocities.

<sup>4</sup> Questions have also been raised in the press regarding the choice of incidents. Rita Manchanda (EPW, 17 August, 1991) charges the Verghese committee of deliberately not taking up well documented cases such as alleged army excesses in Panzgam on 9 June, 1990; the Tregham incident of 10 June, 1990; or the alleged rape and molestation of women in Kupwara, town on 11 June 1990. All these incidents were reported in 'Kashmir Imprisoned'. Equally perplexing was the fact that the Verghese committee made no effort to contact and collect evidence from the HRGs whose reports it criticizes. This even when evidence and contacts were offered to it.

'This is the women's say-so and not a medical finding' (para 202). The fact that Kashmiri village women are willing to use 'their ostensible rape' as a weapon against the army, should tell us something about the deep regard in which they hold our security forces.<sup>5</sup>

Making sense of Kashmir, and in particular of the role of our administration and security forces is becoming increasingly difficult. Between a national media—official and otherwise—that seems to have taken upon itself the onerous duty of combating insurgency and safeguarding the 'unity and integrity' of the country, and HRGs who seem both remarkably insensitive to the environment within which they have to function and prone to being easily 'caught out' in their allegationswhat we are witnessing is a steady shrinkage of space for democratic dissent and differing political imaginations. The Verghese committee report, while enthusiastic in its efforts to save the honour of the Indian Army, by focusing more on the misdemeanours of the HRGs rather than on the general status of human rights, has also contributed to the consolidation of a hegemonic, statist view.

As lay readers and citizens interested in safeguarding and deepening of democratic norms and processes, what we need to be disturbed about is the logic that makes Kashmir more important than the Kashmiri people, where the unity and integrity of the nation-state is held above the inviolable fundamental rights of the populace, and where the honour of the army is deemed more valuable than the dignity of

the people. True, a state and society imbued with fear about disintegration and violence veering towards anarchy, is unlikely to be bothered about what may be considered mere fineries. This, however, can only be a prelude to a mentality of fascism.

It is precisely to avert such a possibility that groups and individuals committed to enlarging spaces for democratic accountability and dissent need to be both more careful and more politic in their strategy. They need to learn how to break through the 'seeming national consensus' in situations like that in Kashmir, by both granting the 'legitimate' law and order functions of the state and by trying to win over sections of the liberal-democratic intelligentsia. Attacking the Press Council report by using wrong and misplaced quotations (cf. the reference to para 326 in the 20 July 1991 editorial of the *EPW*) only exposes their desperation. The struggle against any curbs on our democratic rights must be fought, and fought hard. But the tendency to oppose should not lead to an erosion of the legitimate activities of the state, and that includes law and order. Otherwise, between an increasingly marginalized and tarnished HRGs and a 'hardening' state and intelligentsia, the future of democracy can only be bleak.7

Finally, given the fact that terrorism and insurgency have, at least

'According to the EPW editorial "one extra-judicial killing or a single rape" by army men could be more a "product of human failure or frailty and emotional stress than of deliberate state policy" (paragraph 326)'

The distortion is in my view obvious.

7 Of particular concern are views like that of Arun Shourie, one time General

in certain parts of the country, become a regular part of political life, it has become mandatory for all of us to think up of and debate practical guidelines within which the state can carry out its legitimate counter-insurgency functions. Arguing that this is not our business, or that our job as HRGs is only to expose state brutality, is not only likely to reduce societal hearing space for HRG reports, but is also an abdication of responsibility to actively fashion democratic norms. What is clearly unacceptable is a broader political economy and sociological understanding extended to dissenting groups (even where they are at war with the state), and a narrow legalist/constitutionalist understanding applied to the state. Such a mode of understanding, activity, favoured by our HRGs, is only likely to hasten their demise.

It's now been nearly nine months since the Press Council report, 'Crisis and Credibility', first made its appearance. It's also been over six months since the report came out in book form. At one level this report, like all reports, is now history, forgotten as events and preoccupations move ahead.

In a manner of speaking, it is the BJP-sponsored Ekta Yatra, with its focus on 'secessionism and terrorism' in Kashmir and a vigorous initiative to abrogate Article 370 which is likely to revive public interest in the issues that the report sought to highlight. For the Kashmir valley is far from being a 'settled spot'.

Militancy, terrorism, secessionism, a fight for independence—howsoever one might like to categorize the protest—still continues. As does the

<sup>5.</sup> It may be of interest that recently (September 1991), dozens of women's groups have written to the Press Council objecting to the language used in the Verghese committee report when describing 'alleged' rape victims. Following the Mathura rape case, one of the shifts that occurred in public discourse when discussing rape was that a victim's statement was accepted as prima-facle evidence. Does this report seek to put the clock back? Even admitting that allegations of molestation and rape feature prominently in propaganda, one must not forget that when reports of Kunan-Poshpora were highlighted in the press, the demand of HRGs was for a full judicial enquiry. No judgement had been passed against the Army.

<sup>6</sup> The relevant sections of para 326 of the Verghese committee report read as follows: 'Human rights violations are bad. Even one extra-judicial killing or a single rape is one too many Yet any judgement on these matters, which are more a product of human failure or frailty and emotional stress rather than of deliberate state policy or connivance, should be seen in the context of the scale, spread and intensity of terrorist/insurgency operations and official responses, the number of security forces deployed and the number of incidents that might on investigation be reasonably listed as human rights violations. This is not to extenuate abuses, but to ensure a sense of proportion'

Secretary of the PUCL In his column in Economic Times, 29 September 1991 are not only disturbing sentences like, 'The mood in the rest of India too has changed. No one heeds the civil libertarians now. The people see the terrorists for what they are, the mercenaries of Pakistan And are willing to see the government do Anything, to use any means to put them down' He further goes on to argue regarding our Pakistan policy that: 'It will desist only if it is made to shoulder costs it cannot bear in return. We must devise the most cost-effective methods of making Pakistan bleed for the way it is making our people bleed in Punjab and Kashmir' It is indeed difficult to imagine a clearer call for war.

overwhelming army presence. Reports on human rights violations continue to trickle in, though with the militant movement currently more delegitimized, what with the criminal elements having acquired the upper hand (a saddening but routine feature of such movements), they generate less unease amongst the country's intelligentsia. Rarely is it realized that this is precisely what we need to be on guard against.

Militarily, the movement in Kashmir may well be defeated. But without moves towards resolving the basic issues that gave rise to the problem that we currently face, what we will be left with is only a sullen and disgruntled populace. The 'seeming peace' will remain fragile. And just as Operation Bluestar and similar perceived excesses continue to rankle the Sikh community in Punjab, stories of state excesses are likely to fester, waiting for a more opportune moment to resurface, probably in a more virulent form.

hat is interesting is that the criticism of the Verghese committee report seems to have led to no revision in the thinking of its authors and supporters. In the two-session discussion on the report organized by the Editor's Guild, the critics were hardly given an opportunity to state their differences. If anything, the venerable editor-members of the Guild warmly approved of the report and reportedly even dismissed the suggestion of a full-fledged judicial enquiry into some of the incidents, viz Kunan-Poshpora.

The only public discussion on the report took place in a meeting organized by various women's groups in Delhi. Verghese, too, attended the meeting where serious charges were levelled at the veracity of the report. It was pointed out that the authors of the report had spent less than a day in the valley; were throughout accompanied by army personnel; had no women members even when interviewing 'rape victims'; and though they do not understand Kashmiri, did not think it necessary to have interpreters. And yet they claim authenticity for their version, particularly of their interpretation of the statements of women victims.

Further, it was pointed out to Verghese, that since the Kunan-Poshpora incident took place when the village was cordoned off by the army, allegations of rape have to be seen within the jurisprudential framework of custodial rape. It may be remembered that in the event of custodial rape, it is the accused that are required to prove that they are not guilty. By this token, in Kunan-Poshpora, it is the army personnel that have to establish their innocence, and not the other way around.

nfortunately, these criticisms, though aired in an open meeting, found no reflection in the mainstream media. It seems evident that discussions on human rights violations in situations like the one that obtains in Kashmir and where it is the army that is accused, are unlikely to find any hearing space in our media and with our intelligentsia. With public discourse remaining so constricted, self-righteous, and hostile to investigations of excesses, it comes as no surprise that the fledgling human rights community is imbued with despair and cynicism.

Finally, under the new economic policy regimen being pursued by our current government, reliance on western and international donors has grown manifold. And since 'human rights and democracy', as defined by the West now occupies a prominent space in the 'principles' governing aid conditionalities, 'sensitivity' in official circles to Western criticism is high. The effort thus to prove that activities on the human rights front are 'anti-national' and playing into Pakistani hands has grown more shrill and self-righteous. The recent 'news analysis' by a Senior Correspondent of The Times of India, prominently placed on the front pages for three days is a telling example of the merging of perspectives between the North Block and mainstream media. Such jingoistic nationalism that flays foreign based human rights reportage on India, while approvingly quoting the same sources on Pakistan is a good demonstration of the schizophrenia characterizing our intelligentsia. All in all, bad news for democracy.

## Where has my Gulla gone?

PADMA SACHDEV

This partly allegorical, partly autobiographical story unfolds the tragic dissembling of human relationships in Kashmir. It is perhaps this breakdown more than the unbridgeable political differences between people that has created a Kashmir which is no longer recognizable. The story has been translated from the original Hindi by Ira Pande.

NESTLING in the bowl of the surrounding hills, the Dal Lake glowed like a jewel as my shikara traced a slow, stately path across its calm bosom. Drugged by the sensuous beauty of it all, I lifted a languorous face to have it caressed by a breeze which had no colour, nothing but a perfumed presence....

The paddle-oars were in the hands of Gulla, who guided my shikara past the row of elderly house-

boats moored there. They seemed to watch over us as fond grandparents observe the frolicking of a frisky grandchild. The splash of the oars beat time to the gentle drone of the lapping waves. Nature blushed at its reflection in the mirror of the lake....

Suddenly, the shikara stopped. I opened an indignant eye to see what had disturbed the perfect harmony of this idyll. And there, in front of us, was a lotus-garden. Rich, splendorous blooms, tossing their gaudy heads in the breeze. There were children in little boats, laden with lotus blooms all around us. A little girl, perhaps eight or nine, stripped to the skin, jumped into the waters of the lake. The water here was crystal-clear, and through its surface, one could see the waving fronds of weeds, lush green and dangerously slippery. But the girl seemed as confident as a mermaid and swam easily to the

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surface again. Tossing the wet hair out of her eyes, she held out a blood-red bloom. Beyond her, the Char Chinari suddenly turned human and with their backs to each other, held out red lotus blooms in their hands.

Panting, the girl asked me, 'Will you buy a red lotus?'

I replied with my eyes closed. 'No,' I said rather curtly.

'You must,' she persisted. 'You will have to. Every year you come here and buy my flowers. You will have to buy this red lotus.'

Her harsh voice broke my reverie, and I looked towards Gulla. To my horror, I saw that the paddles in his hand had turned into red lotus blooms and they were dripping blood. There was terror on Gulla's face. Once more the girl's harsh voice rang out, 'Buy these flowers. Pay me just a rupee, but take them.'

I looked at her standing in the water, but now the waters of Dal Lake had frozen over and were shining like glass. The sky was grey, overcast. Dazzling light bounced off the frozen surface of the water, blinding me. The girl stood motionless. I saw that the red flowers she was holding were dripping with blood, covering the frozen surface of the Dal with a pool of blood.

The girl's voice rang out again: 'Come, buy. won't you buy these flowers? This year the Dal has brought forth only red lotus blooms: no yellow and white ones this time. Nor will they ever bloom here again. The Dal will yield only red lotuses now. Come, buy, buy....'

I opened my eyes wide. The blood from the lotus stained the Dal as the red colour that drips out of the setting sun. The girl had now grown up: she was still naked and her whole body was covered in blood. When she felt my gaze upon her, she smiled: but her smile was full of an unbearable sadness. It reminded me of the smile of Lal-didi¹ when her cruel mother-in-law covered stones with rice to feed her. This was how she must have smiled at that cruelty, I thought.

I looked torwards Gulla, but Gulla had vanished! My shikara bobbed rudderless on the lake, the paddles lying like broken wings in the water. I screamed loudly, 'Gulla, where are you? Where have you gone, Gulla? Gulla, where are you? Where?'

I was sobbing in terror and woke up screaming. For a moment I didn't know where I was, I looked around wildly. I wanted to scrub the horror of the dripping blood-red lotus from my mind: I wanted to

hear my own voice. But my voice had disappeared into some deep well within me. I made another effort. 'Where am I?'

I was at home. I was on my bed. But my Gulla had gone. Vanished. I looked all around me and wept again. 'Where has my Gulla gone?' I screamed, trying to use my voice to come back to reality. I picked up the telephone and dialled any old number: it rang. The clock on my table said it was four in the morning. It was ticking—tick-tock, tick-tock.

So this was a dream! How eerie, how real, how luminously true! But piercing this realization came the thought again: where was my Gulla?

My Gulla is not the hero of some wild dream; the phantom creature of some nightmare fantasy. My Gulla was real, is real, my very own Gulla, Ghulam Mohammed.

My Gulla was a creature who spread happiness. When he came on duty, he was happy; when he left after work, he was happy. He had just got married then, and was painfully shy about it. Whenever I asked him about his bride, he'd blush and run away, giggling.

My Gulla's story goes back some thirty-two or three years. I was in hospital, recovering from a dangerous illness and Gulla was a nursing attendant there. I don't remember him when I came in, but later, when I was recovering he seemed to be always around. He lived somewhere near Nishat Bagh where his father had a dairy and sold milk.

Every morning he would come into my ward and ask me cheerily, 'So how are things?' (he always spoke to me in Kashmiri). And I would smile and say, 'I am fine, Gulla,' and he would go away smiling.

One day he asked me, 'You call a cow "mother" don't you?"

I said, 'Yes, we do.' He tittered scornfully. 'How can a cow be called mother?'

I explained patiently: 'Gulla, when someone loses his mother, the cow feeds him with her milk. Should she not be called a mother, then?'

Gulla slowly digested this and nodded. 'Yes, that is true. So a cow is a mother to all of us.'

'Yes, Gulla,' I replied. 'The cow is a mother to us all.'

'I look after cows,' he said. 'Every morning when the azan is given at the mosque, I get up. Sakina keeps sleeping.'

'Sakina is your wife, isn't she?' I asked.

<sup>1.</sup> A famous Sufl poetess of the region.

'How did you know?' he asked, amazed.

'Mothers can tell,' I replied.

'Then I'll call you Moji,' he said. And thus it was that Ghulam Mohammed, alias Gulla, became my son.

Gulla was just a few years older than I was then, but he had a childlike innocence. After he adopted me as his 'Moji', he showered me with love. Every time he took his cows grazing, he would pick wild flowers and ferns for me. Every Sunday, he would wipe his cows down in winter and bathe them in summer.

'The cows really love me,' he'd tell me. 'When I take them their evening feed, they lick my hands. When I bathe or wipe them down, they don't move.'

I'd tell him that animals were more loyal than human beings: he was right to care for them.

'I care for you, too, Moji,' he'd laugh. 'Aren't you my mother after all?'

'Yes, Gulla,' I'd smile.

He would bring me walnut skins to—make my teeth sparkle, he'd say. He would put the wild flowers and ferns he'd bring for me in empty medicine bottles to cheer up my room, saying, 'This year there is a riot of these flowers in the hills: you'll never see flowers like this anywhere else'.

Truly, those wild flowers had a fragrance which was unique. It was as if the pure Himalayan breezes had distilled their essence into those blooms. All day long they would glow in my room and perfume the air, and I would remember with sadness all my loved ones at home, so far away from me.

One day, Gulla came bounding into room.

'Moji,' he babbled excitedly in Kashmiri. 'Bakshi Sahib came to our area today!'

'Who?' I said, feigning ignorance.

'Oh Moji, are you mad? Don't you know who Bakshi Sahib is? The Prime Minister of Kashmir!'

'Oh,' I replied, teasing him. 'Not of Jammu?'

'Yes, of course,' he replied. 'Jammu, too.'

'What did he say to you?' I asked him.

'What would a Prime Minister say to me! I said "Salam" and he raised his hand, too. That's all,' he said simply.

'Didn't he ask you your name?' I went on.

'You're mad, Moji,' he replied, blushing. 'Why should he ask my name? It is the same as his own.'

'But you are Gulla,' I teased.

'Every Ghulam Mohammed in Kashmir is called Gulla when he is young,' he informed me. 'Did you know that even that famous singer Ghulam Mohammed who sings on the radio was called Gulla when he was young?'

Then he began dusting my table vigorously, singing a Habba Khatoon song. 'Call me back home, I can't abide my in-laws...'

I kept listening to his humming. Then he looked up and said, 'O Moji, I almost forgot. There is a little Gulla who has come to the children's ward.'

'Which Gulla?' I asked, a little confused with so many Gullas around.

'This one has a clean head,' he replied, smiling.

'Clean head?' I asked.

'Clean-shaven head, Moji. His hair was shaved off when he came in.'

'Is this the little fellow who wears a long shirt and roams the whole ward?' I asked.

'Yes, that's the one,' Gulla nodded.

Then, when the doctors had made their rounds, Gulla brought in Gulla. The little fellow was about five or six years old and his whole head had been shaved, and then bandaged on one side, which didn't seem to bother him at all. As soon as he came, he asked me, 'Do you have any biscuits?'

I was a little taken aback. What a remarkably uninhibited child!

'Don't you know what biscuits are?' he went on, taking my stunned silence for ignorance. 'They are round and sweet.'

'What will you do with them?' I asked him.

'Nothing. I want to see what they are like,' and he got up. 'I'll go now—Pll come again.'

That evening I got a packet of round, sweet biscuits and sent for him. He came running, without a care for his poor, ill head and asked me, 'Did you get them?'

He made himself comfortable on my bed, as if he did this everyday, and said, 'Where are they?'

I handed him the entire packet. He ripped open the wrapping and forgot all about me in his eagerness to eat them. There was something deeply satisfying about him eating those round, sweet biscuits. He nibbled each one of them (so that he wouldn't have to share any) and when he finished the last one, he looked up and said approvingly, 'They were very good.'

'How would I know?' I asked him. 'You never gave me any.'

<sup>2,</sup> Mother in Kashmiri.

'How could I share such few biscuits with anyone?' he asked innocently. 'But don't worry, to-morrow I'll share them.'

After that gentle hint, I got biscuits for him every day. And every day he would gorge himself, brush the crumbs off and run away.

One day, his mouth stuffed with biscuits, he looked up and said, 'Apa, when I pass the fifth class, I'll marry you.'

Will I still have to buy you biscuits? I asked him, a twinkle in my eyes.

'Naturally,' he replied. 'Did you think I'd marry you without them? When I grow up,' he went on, 'I'll give you a hundred rupees every evening. In summer, when the visitors from Hindustan come, I'll work hard and earn money for you. You will have to cook for me, though,' he warned me. 'I'll bring you a dressed chicken.'

'Why, won't you skin it yourself?' I asked him.

'No, no, I can't,' he shuddered. 'I'm scared of blood.'

One day, I asked him, 'Gulla, how will we marry? You are so young.'

'Oh don't worry', he replied airily. I won't be young forever. I'll grow big and then everyone will have to call me Ghulam Mohammed. When I grow big,' he suggested disarmingly, 'you grow small, and then when the *Qaxi* asks you whether you want to marry me, you say yes. But you must learn how to cook, for you will have to do all the cooking.'

'What will you eat?' I asked.

'Um-m-mm. Haak and Bhaat. Sometimes, haak with gosht.'

I bowed my head, like a good obedient wife.

'I'll get you wild rice from the village,' he went on, carried away by the promise of good food. 'You don't get rice like that anywhere in Hindustan.'

All this talk of cooking and food made Gulla homesick.

'My mother is a wonderful cook, you know: she cooks delicious gosht. But whenever they cut up a bird at home, I get up and run away: I'm scared of blood. A bird always knows when its hour has come,' he mused, 'It starts crying...'

'Why do you eat it, then? I asked.

'Because Allah made him for me to eat,' he retorted, and scampered off.

One day, as I ruffled his hair lovingly, I asked him, 'Gulla, why did God strike us down with this illness?'

He pondered on this for a while and replied, 'We have to atone our past wrongs.'

'But have you ever done anything so wrong?' I pursued the topic. 'I don't think I have either, then why us, Gulla, and not all those other sinners?'

Gulla was silent for a while. Then slowly he spoke, 'We don't know, Apa, but maybe Allah Mian keeps an account of His own.' And then as if this was a line of thought he didn't want to pursue any further, he sprang up and ran away. I followed his retreating form until he disappeared.

Then a day came when, his mouth full of biscuits, he announced, 'My penance is over: I am well now. Today the big Doctor Sahib told me to send for my people from the village to take me home. May God release you soon as well,' he added solemnly and raised his hands in benediction over me as old men do: 'Amen'.

'Amen,' I echoed.

And Gulla left for his village. Gulla had left. But Gulla was still there. He would nurse me lovingly and give me news from all over Kashmir. When he was in a jovial mood, he'd tell me, 'You know, Moji, my father was brought up by Bakshi Sahib.'

'How is that?' I'd ask.

'He was a *chowkidar* in Bakshi *Sahib's* house. 'When Bakshi *Sahib* became a big man, he made him a constable: so Bakshi *Sahib* is his father, isn't he?'

He'd cock his head at me. I'd look at him in wonder. What a remarkably simple and innocent man my Gulla was!

Today when I dreamt of him after all these years, the perfume of the lotus blooms had been overpowered by the stench of blood. Every bit of Kashmir left now is smothered in flames.

I knew a Gulla once. But which Ghulam Mohammed alias Gulla is this whose stony face stares at me from the front page of my newspaper today? Who holds an AK-47 rifle, and whose face is masked, whose eyes are full of terror and hatred? Whose hands drip blood, hands that can kill at will?

If this is my Gulla, then who is responsible for putting such lethal weapons in his innocent hands?

No, I do not, I cannot believe that this is my Gulla. My Gulla balked at shedding the blood of a chicken, how can I believe then that my chickenhearted Gulla would wield a wanton gun to kill men? No, this face in the newspaper is not the face of my Ghulam Mohammed.

Then where is my Gulla? Where has he gone?

I fling the newspaper away and say once again: 'Balai lagai tch-tchuk na myon Gulla bihi.' (By his beautiful face, I swear you are not my Gulla.)

### Books

KASHMIR: Beyond the Vale by M.J. Akbar. New Delhi, Viking, 1991.

A LONG time ago, there was a landlocked kingdom... And so Akbar's tale of the vale of Kashmir, spanning a good thousand years commences. The work has obviously been penned with very presentist concerns in mind. In less than a third of the book, roughly eight hundred years of cultural and political history is run through; though it is more of the latter than the former. The rest of the book covers the period from the beginning of Dogra rule, to the convoluted and disturbing unfolding of political events of the past four to five decades. Somewhere along the line, through repeated reversals of the supposedly good intentions of well-meaning people, the history of Kashmir reads almost like a Greek tragedy—of forces beyond the ken of those involved, but nevertheless controlling their destinies.

The book is written with the intent of tracing the events that have led to the trauma that Kashmir is undergoing. Guiding Akbar's reading of these events is the attempt to understand the subversion of the foundational cultural notion of Kashmiriyat on which both the self-definition and so much of Kashmir's own politics vis-a-vis the non-Kashmiri is located. The work assumes that the notion of Kashmiriyat, from the time of the enlightened Zainul Abidin, to an enigmatic statesman like Sheikh Abdullah, has undergone little change. A rather tenuous assumption that. For Akbar, the working notion of this Kashmiriyat is: 'a spirit of independence and secularism joined by free will to a larger comity' (p. 192). The inauguration of this notion, within a Kashmiri identity sodefined, is located during the regin of Zainul Abidin, and embodied religiously in the order of the rishis. The book frequently returns to Kashmiriyat to measure the course of political events over the centuries and its subsequent subversion. This surely is the least problematic part of the book.

Such heuristic devices do help in providing a simulacrum of order for fathoming a labrynthine history. Nevertheless, a deeper problem prevails. Over a number of creditable books, Akbar has done these intellectual biographies of contemporary political figures, where he has typecast their thought into either a politics of uniting or dividing people, across religious lines, or whether their political vision was inclusive or enclosed. This has been the organizing principle of a series of hagiographies: naturally what is a political vision or a philosophical position is uncritically conflated with realpolitik, or the politics of the party they are associated with.

The bad guys are all those who don't share Akbar's political vision—but of course this has to do with their misplaced philosophical conceptions. Which is why the latter half of the book under review dis-

turbs, for the travesty of Kashmiriyat (assuming Akbar's definition) cannot be explained merely in terms of the errors of omission and commission of Nehru and other political actors. To conceive the problematic along these lines reduces the work to an apology for an otherwise well conceived series of political actions, and the historian to a contemporary qastdakhwan.

Another way of looking at the contemporary Kashmir problem, despite the secular credentials of two of the main protagonists in Akbar's tale, Nehru and the Sheikh, is the unfolding of particular political practices, in a way that was jointly produced. For that is what decides the quotidian play of political life: and on this count Kashmir has witnessed the tension between a highly centrist politics on the one hand, but for a brief interlude of little more than a decade, and the rule of local satrapies. While Akbar in passing notes the 'carrot and stick policy' that has repeatedly been the bane of Kashmiri politics; he inadvertently, or otherwise refuses to discuss how this precipitated in the total negligence of the development of the state. The tension between these two forces has not given way on account of a denouement, but because it has been rendered irrelevant by those whose lives have been most severely affected by such neglect.

The communalization of the Indian polity has over the decades produced its own aberrations on the Kashmiri psyche, and Akbar's book is sensitive to it, particularly in interpreting the utterances and actions of the actors involved. However, since the book attempts to offer no way out of the present imbroglio, one can only draw probable inferences for the future, from the way Akbar treats his material. There is no inkling in the book of a more federal solution to the problem, despite the recognition of Kashmiri identity, for the author appears to have been consumed by the charismatic personalities of Nehru and his successors on the one hand and Sheikh and his successor on the other. The gains of such charismatic leadership, as we see today, are shortlived, but the losses are far deeper.

Dhruv Raina

#### MY FROZEN TURBULENCE IN KASHMIR by

Jagmohan. Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1991.

KASHMIR and Jagmohan have been so intertwined in recent public memory, that the very act of reading this book almost implies a political statement. Vociferously upheld as 'the classic' on contemporary Kashmir by his admirers (Arun Shourie, Swapan Dasgupta), the book has equally vociferously been condemned by those who disagree with his 'let's get tough on the militants' line. Unfortunately, the text itself, 723 pages long, does not easily lend itself to an

empathetic reading. Other than the somewhat offputting title, as also his over-colourful language, there is the ever-present strain of self-righteousness, a near paranoia about his detractors, and an overwhelming desire to 'set the record straight' and clear his name from the vicious mudslinging that it has been subjected to. Nevertheless, if the reader can overcome these somewhat formidable obstacles, then he is in for a forceful, gripping and disturbing read.

One cannot but have sympathy for the unenviable position Jagmohan was put in during his second term as Governor of Jammu and Kashmir in January 1990. For whatever may have been his memories of his first term, the accolades that were showered on him for setting right a slothful and corrupt administration, initiating many developmental ventures, and in particular making pilgrimage to the Vaishno Devi complex a far more pleasurable affair, going into govern a province caught in the grip of militant and fundamentalist insurgency, that too as a nominee of a minority, fractured and hamstrung government at the centre, could not have been an easy decision.

Subsequent events bore out the early fears. If the last two years' handling of Kashmir proves anything, it is that our rulers sitting in Delhi have learnt little. Even worse, petty politicking and scoring easy personal victories in an effort to beat the opposition within one's own ranks, has consistently won over evolving a constructive national policy on Kashmir. The first eleven chapters of the book are a detailed survey of Jagmohan's understanding of the early history of Kashmir, the Accession Accord, Article 370, the Abdullah family years, all the way to his 'controversial' dismissal of Farooq Abdullah's government, his replacement by his brother-in-law G. M. Shah, and the Rajiv-Farooq Accord.

The picture that Jagmohan paints is of a venal and corrupt administration and polity, where for a variety of reasons, the valley, if not the entire state, was left to be governed as a corrupt and slothful Sultanate. Thus, notwithstanding hundreds of crores of rupees pumped in as subsidy, little had happened to improve the socio-economic conditions of the citizens. Even worse, not only was little done to emotionally integrate Kashmir into the national mainstream, fundamentalist and pro-Pakistan forces were permitted to gather strength. Consequently, the populace, particularly the younger people, once disillusioned with rigged elections and indifferent performance, not unexpectedly took to militancy. This, combined with the machinations of Pakistan, has led to the current impasse.

Such a rendering of history is likely to be challenged by many. Kashmiri critics have often pointed out that what is believed to be subsidy, was actually loans from the central government; that in the net, Kashmir has been characterized by capital outflows. Article 370, a constant bugbear with the 'nationalists', is defended not only as constitutionally correct, but a measure under which reforms were carried out in the state and some integration was achieved with

the rest of the country. As for a set of special privileges for the 'mulkis', it is pointed out that similar restrictions on non-locals exist in other states, viz. Himachal Pradesh, as also the tribal areas and the North-East.

Equally contentious is the rendering of recent history. While Jagmohan is undoubtedly on firm ground when he details the constant shifts in official policy and contrary signals being sent to all concerned, it is indeed a moot point whether his 'crush the militants before restarting the political process' policy was ever likely to succeed. Quite clearly, the dominant mood in the valley since 1989 has been anti-India. Over the years the size and capacity of various militant outfits has grown. In such a situation, extensive security operations, no matter how skillfully and diplomatically carried out, were bound to further alienate the populace. And Jagmohan's battering-ram style, buttressed by his conviction that he alone stood between order and chaos (somewhat reminiscent of the famous Indira Gandhi poster), a ham-handed handling of the press, did not help.

At the end, this reader comes away with mixed feelings about Jagmohan and his Kashmir policy. There is no doubt that the man has been sinned against, not just by the politicians but also by sections of the administration, the press, and the upholders of human rights. But what is equally disturbing is his near-exclusive reliance on the 'law and order' approach to win over the disaffected populace and region for the country. When combined with his new-found zeal for a revitalized and resurgent Hinduism, evident for instance in his plan for establishing Varanasi as the spiritual and moral centre of India, the disquiet only deepens.

Jagmohan comes across as a fervent nationalist, committed to uphold the 'unity and integrity' of India by any means. Without belittling his honestly held passion, it is worth considering whether history in fact holds national boundary lines as particularly sacroscant. Can one really hold on to a populace unwilling to be part of the national mainstream? Have popular and mass-based insurgencies, particularly on the borders of nation-states, ever been effectively contained by use of force? What does such an application of force do to the civilized, democratic norms by which we want to be governed? Is not the insecurity about the possible disintegration of the country being manipulatively whipped up by a recurrent pointing to the 'foreign hand' and fundamentalist forces within?

Jagmohan, in his reliance on a resurgent Hindu nationalism joins a long galaxy of social activists and thinkers who have traced the ills of this country to a weakening of spirit. Let us however not forget that what has made this part of the world a place worth living (and dying) for has been its easy tolerance for diversities. Moves towards homogenization and integration may well save our state, but with the possible loss of our civilizational distinction. And it is likely that even 'patriots' like Jagmohan may find this cost too heavy.

Harsh Sethi

IN KASHMIR by U. K. Zutshi. Bombay, Manohar, 1986.

WHEN asked to review a book nearly nine years after its publication in 1986, the assumption is that it is seen as being of seminal importance in understanding the problem of present day insurgency in Kashmir. But U. K. Zutshi's Emergence of Political Awakening in Kashmir, despite the promise it raises about placing in a socio-political context the first-ever popular uprising in Kashmir against the Dogra Rajput ruler in 1931, disappoints with its conventional flogging of British imperialism as the villain of the piece.

Moreover, Zutshi's reductionist conclusion that the 1931 mass uprising was merely a communal agitation belies his own assemblage of sophisticated socioeconomic data in the book. His conclusions in no way afford any insight into understanding why within seven years of the uprising, the Muslim Conference (AJKMC), which had spearheaded the agitation, split with a section led by Sheikh Abdullah forming the National Conference (AJKNC).

And while Zutshi stresses the role played by the emergence of the institution of the Mirwaiz in the valley in the deepening of communal consciousness and eventually even to providing a platform for Sheikh Abdullah, his analysis does not prepare us for the fact that by 1932 the Mirwaiz Maulvi Yusuf Shah had thrown in his lot with the Hindu and Muslim landlords against the anti-feudal forces which were to cohere around the NC and Sheikh Abdullah.

In contrast to Zutshi, Gautam Navlakha in his essay 'Bharat's Kashmir War' (EPW, 21 December, 1991) analyses the 1931 uprising as a revolt against feudal fetters. As the Muslims of the valley were the first targets of feudal exploitation by the Hindu Maharaja, they were the first to raise the banner of revolt but the demands were not communal—recognising the proprietary rights over land of land holders in Kashmir and a change in the Maharaja's policy of recruitment in the state services.

Commenting on the split in the AJKMC, Navlakha says that it saw the oppression of Kashmiri Muslims in terms of their religious opposition to the ruler and therefore saw the solution in a theocratic state (read two-nation theory). Whereas the AJKNC explained the oppression to be the result of feudalism and ending the hold of the feudal jagirdars as the solution.

Zutshi, however, maintains that the 'mass political awakening came to be enveloped by a communal ideology and was inevitably accompanied by communal discord'. Not surprisingly, this perspective has found a ready echo in the mind set of the ideologues of the Bharatiya Janata Party. It insidiously provides historical legitimacy to a communal analysis of the current insurgency in the valley and the solution

Zutshi is highly defensive about the overtly communal politics of the Dogra period and seeks to obfuscate the issue by blaming it on British colonial policies. Even in his analysis of the 1931 uprising, he backs the conspiracy theory about the British inciting Muslim communalism with an eye on the inevitable backlash in the form of Hindu communalism. The British were out to squeeze Hari Singh who had adopted too independent a tone at the First Round Table Conference in London and had begun to reassert the restoration of Gilgit.

On the controversial issue of land holders in Kashmir as opposed to the people in Jammu being deprived of proprietary right over land, Zutshi once again holds responsible the British induced land settlement policy. It was to prevent land alienation that the Dogra rulers subsequently claimed that since Gulab Singh had been sold Kashmir all land belonged to him. Zutshi argues that the Dogra rulers were motivated by their desire to prevent British subjects from buying up the valley from poor Muslims.

When it comes to addressing the problem of educational backwardness of the Muslims in the state, Zutshi dismisses the allegations of relative neglect by the Hindu officers of the Dogra rulers. But the very examples he draws upon expose a policy of discrimination as in the case of the renewal of a state grant to the fledgling Islamia School It was approved but the Hindu member in charge of education in the state council added a proviso: 'school authorities may be directed to replace existing unqualified teachers with competent staff', a condition which was well nigh impossible to meet.

Zutshi acknowledges that the burden of the onerous taxation policy of the Dogra rulers led to the pauperisation of the people, 93% of which were Muslims. He however blames it on the need to defray Britain's forward policy. Kashmir shawl makers were additionally hit by British policy of eroding the monopoly of Kashmir, Zutshi explains.

Where Zutshi breaks new ground is in going over the by now well known syncretic Rishi-Pir tradition of Kashmir. He stresses that cultural differentiation between the segments of society in Kashmir was based on various hereditary occupational categories rather than the faith they followed. Drawing attention to the cultural homogeneity among the feudal eite Hindus and Muslims Zutshi indicates that the head gear worn by upper class pandit women was similar to the distinguishing characteristics of the head gear worn by the andrem (upper class) Mulims.

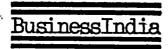
But more often, Zutshi's defensiveness about the communal character of the Dogra regime and his propensity to flog British imperialism, leads him to distort his analysis of the socio-economic and political forces which found an outlet in the 1931 uprising against autocratic rule. Zutshi's judgement of the 1931 mass popular uprising as a communal agitation reinforces the tendency to reduce the present day insurgency to a purely communal revolt. To understand why 13 July, Martyr's Day, is regarded as so significant by the people of the valley we have to look beyond Zutshi's analysis.

Rita Manchanda

## THINK

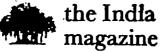
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UNHAPPY KASHMIR—The Hidden Story by Dina Nath Raina. New Delhi, Reliance Publishing, 1990.

MILITANCY in the Kashmir valley has generated fresh interest in the history of Jammu and Kashmir, especially the international ramifications of the dispute which was taken to the United Nations by the Indian government. For many who have been born in independent India, the issues in Kashmir remain obfuscated by the propaganda of officialdom on both sides of the border. The new literature on Kashmir, if Raina's book and another written by Jagmohan are taken as examples, have done nothing to advance academic or journalistic scholarship on the valley and its people.

In fact, Raina leaves little doubt about his views in the preface: 'After 43 years of independence for the first time, India is faced with a grave threat to her very existence as a nation...we have to be absolutely clear about the nature of the movement in Kashmir...the movement in Kashmir has nothing to do with insufficient job opportunities etc. It is a movement fired by Islamic fundamentalism. It is a movement patronised by many foreign countries and agencies not just Pakistan.' It goes without saying that in 1990, when the book was written, there were major contradictions between the pro-independence JKLF and the pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen, a fact that finds no place in the author's scheme of things.

After promising us hidden facts, the book surprisingly stops short of the events that led to the birth of militancy in the valley. The only reference to contemporary events are selective extracts from select newspapers to buttress the point. More than anything, it is the simplistic and crass interpretation of developments in Kashmir which have contributed to an unhappy populace, up in arms against the Indian state. Obviously, even new scholarship is hardly moving forward in providing a more convincing and incisive account of the tragedy that has befallen the Kashmiris.

A derisive attitude towards the majority community in the valley is visible as the author attempts a broad sweep of history. Writing about the early 20th century, Raina says, 'Educated Hindus were employed by Muslim traders and exporters as their accountants. True to the pattern, prevalent in other parts of India, Muslims in Kashmir were also educationally backward. In schools, Muslim boys were drop-outs.

A common thread running through the book is that of 'heroes and villains'. The author appears to have made up his mind that all responsibility for Kashmir's woes lies with Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah, who are painted as black as possible. Also visible is the strenuous effort to build up Sardar Patel as a person who is always in the right: nothing can escape the attention of the 'Iron Man'. If at all he

does accede to special concession, it is because of ill-health, not owing to a considered political view-point. Complete and total reliance on V. Shankar's biography for the entire gamut of differences between Nehru and Patel is a hallmark of the book. Hardly any other source materials are used to substantiate the assertions made.

Raina's principal contention is that Nehru and his blind friendship severely compromised the Indian government's policy on Kashmir. He quotes Nehru: 'We have gone to Kashmir to protect the people and as soon as this duty is discharged, our forces need not remain there and we shall withdraw our forces. If the Pakistan government is sincere they can stop the entry of these raiders and thus accelerate the return of peace and order. After that the people of Kashmir can decide their future and we shall accept their decision.

'In order to establish our bonafides, we have suggested that when the people are given the chance to decide their future, this should be done under the supervision of an impartial tribunal such as the United Nations Organisation.' Raina questions Nehru's wisdom: 'The Maharaja had offered unconditional accession and surrendered his sovereignty and all his powers to the Indian union. Would not the people of Kashmir have become free citizens of democratic India and enjoyed the benefits of its Constitution? Did Pt. Nehru make it clear to the rulers of Patiala, Jaipur, Baroda, Bhopal, Mysore, Travancore that their governments must in future be carried on according to the popular will?'

In the author's scheme, liberalism of any hue is obviously anathema. Arguably, Nehru's liberalism on Kashmir soon gave way to the exigencies of realpolitik and he soon abandoned a democratic path in favour of the intelligence-police option, a feature of India's Kashmir policy. Even this shortlived, limited dose of liberalism attracts the wrath of Raina, to whom Article 370 is complete anathema. 'The Article is not only redundant but has become an irritant to our national integrity and sovereignty.'

To go slightly backward in time, Raina on the subject of plebiscite opens his chapter with: 'Kashmir is an unalienable and inseparable constituent of India. There is no room for even the slightest ambiguity about this basic fact.' The background to the dispute does not count in arriving at such a conclusion.

The author then proceeds to invoke the authority of the royal accession to announce that the Maharaja had full authority to decide about the future of the people of Kashmir. Raina, clearly, is unimpressed by the fact that Kashmir remains a dispute, which may blow up in the face of the Indian state. Not for him the right of the people to decide their own future. The right of self-determination, central to people everywhere in the world, has failed to cut ice with the author.

Seminarist

#### KASHMIR: A Disputed Legacy, 1846-1990 by Alastair Lamb. Hertingfordbury, Roxford Books, 1991.

IN his new book on Kashmir, Alastair Lamb says: 'War produces propaganda, directed towards both internal and external consumption; and propaganda can all too easily turn into dogma believed implicitly by those who created it in the first place' (p. 148). Kashmir is indeed a good example of this psychological syndrome, because it is an on-going conflict which constantly incorporates new concepts—ethnicity, fundamentalism, human rights—without allowing the grass to grow over the old faultlines. But as these get blurred by new overlays it becomes even more difficult to separate fact from fiction and propagandist posturings from events on the ground.

The publication of a book that seeks to delineate the historical evolution of the Kashmir conflict is therefore a welcome event. Coming, moreover, from a historian of Alastair Lamb's reputation as a specialist of Asian border disputes, one can expect an impartial account of what was, until recently, a territorial dispute over a region whose borders run parallel to the geographical divide between Central and South Asia as well as the civilizational division between the Islamic world in the West and the Indian and Chinese worlds to the East.

Not unexpectedly then, Lamb starts his book with a detailed treatment of the northern border of Kashmir, both at its extreme western (Gilgit, Hunza) and eastern ends (Aksai Chin). Although they seem of only remote interest in the light of today's problems, he shows that these very problems have their origin in the perception of Kashmir as a territory of strategic importance. According to Lamb this territorial obsession largely influenced the course of events at the time of partition and only slowly gave way to the growing importance of the East/West faultline running through Kashmir, between an Islamic subnationalism and Indian nationalism, which today dominates the conflict. Lamb does justice to this particular strand, devoting a whole chapter to the evolution of politics within Kashmir before 1947. He picks up these threads at later intervals with chapters on politics 'Inside J&K 1947 and 1965', and again on 'Sheikh Abdullah 1966-1982'.

Apart from these two components of Kashmir's modern history, Lamb focuses, naturally enough, on the third major component: Kashmir as a conflict zone between India and Pakistan. He deals with it chronologically, starting with two chapters on 'Partition' and 'Accession', to be followed by accounts which take the three wars as methodological pivots. His last chapter is entitled 'India's failure in J&K 1977 to 1990' and he signs off with a 'Final Word' written in 1991.

It is in this last chapter that Professor Lamb puts forth his main thesis most succinctly, which is that 'a good case can be made that India has no business at all in the Vale of Kashmir' (p. 343). Since he sees no other way to solve the present Kashmir crisis than by 'a return to basics, to the situation as it existed at the time of the Transfer of Power' (ibid.), it might be useful to briefly look at his insights regarding this particular period and how they substantiate his claim that India has 'no business' to be in Kashmir,

Lamb's argument is that Mountbatten (and/or Britain) colluded with India (i.e. Nehru) in getting Kashmir into the fold of the Indian Union and that Pakistan's policies in trying to thwart this were basically reactive to these plans. He tries to prove it by three points:

- (i) The return of the Gilgit Agency to Maharaja Hari Singh in June 1947 was 'mala fide'.
- (ii) Mountbatten unduly influenced Cyril Radcliffe in his Gurdaspur award in order to give Hari Singh an option to accede to India.
- (iii) The presence of a Patiala Battalion in J&K before the incursion by tribesmen is a pointer that Pakistan's policy was in effect a reaction to these highly doubtful manoeuvres.

This is not the place to examine in detail these historical arguments. Looked at purely from their intrinsic consistency, however, they do not seem convincing, despite the considerable force and the brilliant narrative flow with which Lamb presents them. A few examples are sufficient to substantiate this prima facle impression. Regarding the revocation of the 1935 Lease (which had given the Gilgit Agency to British India for sixty years), Lamb contends that Mountbatten should have 'let Pakistan be the guardian of the Gilgit Agency and the high passes of the Karakorum' (p. 107). He did not do so because Mountbatten hoped that the role of guardian 'would be filled in the end by India rather than Pakistan' (lbid.).

Whatever the motives of the Viceroy—and they could indeed have been just these—Lamb glosses over the fact that Mountbatten acted here with constitutional propriety. British India had leased part of a territory, and as it was about to leave India, the Imperial Government handed it back to its rightful owner as part of the cleaning-up operations.

Similarly with the Gurdaspur awards. There is indeed strong force in the argument that Mountbatten, under the influence of Nehru, did do some armtwisting in getting three tehsil's of Gurdaspur district (and two of Ferozepur district) adjudicated to India. But again he does not seriously discuss the argument that by doing so, Mountbatten made sure that Hari Singh did have a real choice regarding the accession of his state, which he would not have had without the link provided by these eastern tehsils from India to J&K. After all, the terms of reference for the Radcliffe Commission stipulated a demarcation of the boundaries on the basis of 'contiguous majority areas', which were not necessarily districts. And they

contain, moreover, the proviso that in proceeding thus, the Commission 'will also take into account other factors' (quoted by Lamb, p. 104). Rather than going into the merits of the case, Lamb seems keen to discredit the Commission, calling it a 'useful scapegoat', and its independence 'a charade' (p. 116).

Lamb reserves the most scathing attack on Indian deviousness (and British connivance) for the discussion regarding the presence of Patiala battalion in Jammu and Srinagar, which was there 'at least' from 17 October 1947. Quoting Indian sources, he demolishes, with great effect, the popular Indian myth that the airlifted troops landed in the valley on the morning of 27 October, just in time to defend a deserted Srinagar airfield. As regards the reasons for their presence, Lamb himself leaves open the possibility that it might have been the result of an informal arrangement between the rulers of the two states, agreed upon before Patiala became part of the Indian Union on 15 August.

Nevertheless, on the basis of this little-noticed fact, Lamb then constructs his main prosecution against India: Either 'the Patiala men were in Kashmir in blatant violation of the de facto Indian Constitution, or ... their presence was approved by New Delhi' (p. 157). The motive for making this the cornerstone of his argument becomes clear in what follows: 'If the former, then their status on the most charitable interpretation was very similar to that of the Pathan tribesmen; if the latter, then the Government of India was sponsoring direct military involvement in the state of J&K before the tribal sion" let alone the Maharaja's accession (ibid.). Elsewhere he goes even further, saying that 'a good case can be made that the presence of the tribesmen was a direct response to the arrival of the Patiala, troops' (p. 155). This flies in the face of Lamb's own admission that 'tribal involvement began in the middle of September (or even earlier)' (p. 133).

It is here that Lamb's detachment as a historian unfortunately is clearly compromised by his desire to prove a point, namely that in the tribal incursion which catalysed events in 1947, Pakistan was merely an innocent bystander. He thereby gets entangled in self-contradiction. He gives a detailed account of the Poonch rebellion and does not hide the involvement from Pakistan, both in terms of logistics as well as arms supplies. He shows that the political leadership was aware (to say the least) of what was going on across the border and turned a blind eye (if not two) to the recruitment and passage of the Pathan tribesmen. Yet, he maintains that the rebellion 'represented an internal coup', that the rebels 'opened the gates to the tribesmen in the interests of an entity which in two days was to declare itself the independent state of Azad Kashmir' (p. 155).

This argument culminates in the truly fantastic assertion (by Pakistan, but accepted 'in part' by Lamb), that 'the Maharaja by 26/27 October was no longer competent to sign any instrument of

accession because he had, to all intents and purposes, been overthrown by his subjects' (p. 155). He concludes: 'There is not in reality a great deal of difference between the position of these tribesmen on 22 October and that of the Indian Army...on 27 October...The Indians were there at the invitation of the Maharaja on just about the same basis as the tribesmen were there at the invitation of the Poonch rebels now declared subordinates of the independent State of Azad Kashmir' (p. 155).

As Professor Lamb progresses in his history of bilateral relations, the lack of evenhandedness becomes increasingly evident, and scholarship obviously suffers. Be it his assessment of the impact of the Sino-Pak Border Agreement of 1963, his account of 'Operation Gibraltar' leading to the 1965 War, or his remarks on Pakistan's nuclear programme: it looks as if Lamb bears a deep grudge against India which allows him to apply various yardsticks when judging historical events, however lucid their presentation may be. Thus it is only to be expected that his last chapter, on 'India's Failure 1977-1990', is full of partisan invective and does not, regretfully, serve as a pathfinder, so necessary in the present lack of practicable alternative policies.

Constricted by his fixed view that Pakistan is hardly involved in the conflict, Lamb is unable to explain the proliferation, strategies, logistics and internal conflicts of the various underground movements, leave alone their staying power in the face of a '300,000-men strong Indian force' (p. 342). He admits the 'possible' 'unofficial' assistance by 'individuals established on the Pakistani side' (p. 340). But Pakistan 'in the main was a spectator', better even, 'in great measure an innocent victim' (p. 340). And while the Kashmir valley presents 'an Indian military occupation of a conquered land', where India is 'faced with a terminal colonial situation' (p. 322), the view on the other side is almost blissful—'Azad Kashmir is wedded in its close alliance to Pakistan' from which 'only external force could lead to divorce' (p. 342).

It is therefore hardly surprising—but given the high expectations, also a great disappointmentthat Lamb is completely unable to gauge the perceived implications of a possible loss of Kashmir to India, saying curtly that 'Kashmir is a special case with its own unique history, and it creates no precedents for other special cases such as the Sikhs or Assam.... (p. 343). But then, Lamb has given up, almost gleefully, India altogether, by saying that the rate of disintegration of the Indian Union is a process which is probably now inevitable' (p. 343). One hopes that he is as inaccurate in this judgement as he has unfortunately been in much of his treatment of Indo-Pak bilateral relations over Kashmir. At any rate, one has to conclude that the hope he evinces at the beginning of his book-to provide 'something better than imagination, speculation and partisan argument'—has, sadly, not been fulfilled.

**Bernard Imhasly** 

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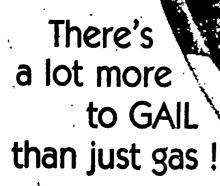
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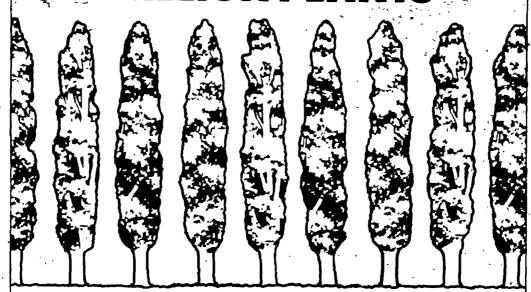
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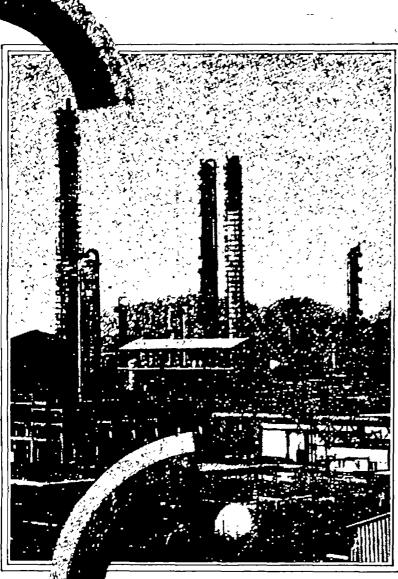
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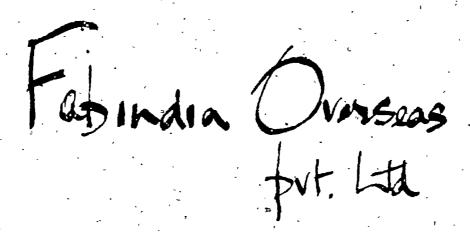
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### The problem

THE changes in the Soviet Union, spectacular and bewildering as they are, collapse into three clear groups: the end of the cold war internationally, the end of communist rule domestically, and straddling both, the end of the Soviet Union itself.

The cold war shaped post-war international power structures as surely as imperialism had done in the century before 1914; a new power balance is in the process of being created, and it goes by the formula of the 'multi-polar' world which, strangely, is sometimes employed in the same breath with the 'unipolar' world of American domination.

The monopoly rule of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union provided a millennial faith to many and a career to millions, and both are now suffering the effects of spiritual and salaried unemployment. Strangely, or perhaps not so strangely, it was not the brilliance of Karl Marx's critical analysis of capitalism that inspired the millions but the ecumenical church that radiated political power in-his name. Their deepest agonies were induced by the heresies of Stalinism, Trotskyism et al and the schisms of the Chinese and others: the survival of the pagan bourgeois brought forth only formulaic incantations about their imminent extinction.

As is typical of such confrontations, their opponents (or partners) in the cold war ceaselessly pro-

phesied the doom of communism but did not predict it. They were taken by surprise when it happened and by the manner in which it happened; and they have at times even betrayed the greatest anxiety rather than simple satisfaction that it should have happened at all. Few, except the reformers from within the Party itself, predicted that the reform would be an internal transformation, not the revolutionary disintegration that overtook the ancien regime in 1917.

Most of all, the break up of the Union itself has surprised and embarrassed as many. It was assumed that the ex-colonial countries of Central Asia would secede first, for they were culturally Islamic (nearly) and colonial subjects to wit. Instead, the very European Baltic was the keenest to go and the oppressed Central Asians somewhat perversely anxious to remain. But most unexpectedly, the assault on the Union came, illogically as it seemed, from the centre, first from Gorbachev through new Union treaty proposals, and then from Boris Yeltsin replacing Gorbachev and Gorbachev's proposals with yet another set. Yet they all hang together: the whole revolution was carried out from the top and from the centre, and it flowed downward and outward. In this respect, the perestroika revolution faithfully follows the tradition of the Communist Party's statecraft, Many would no doubt like to see it even as a Russian tradition: the only problem with that argument is

12

that the Revolution of 1905 and 1917 were assaults from below, not initiatives from above.

It is now perhaps possible to consider the Soviet experience without the disturbing crackle of cold war polemic from both sides. The judgement of history will probably be that the Soviet revolution was the former Russian empire's device to industrialize without losing great power status. It could have always receded into a second-rank power like Spain and modernized under the protective wing of a superpower; or it could have descended into colonial status and spun eternally in the vicious circle of poverty. However, even if the empire had broken up permanently, Russia herself was too large, developed and unified by the 20th century to subside either into second rank or into colonialism. A choice of the Stalinist style of industrialization was therefore available, and it opted for it.

There was of course another option for insecure great powers, that of defeat or pyrrhic victory and reconstruction under the aegis of the supreme leader, America. The Germans and Japanese surrendered their great power ambitions through defeat, the British and French through their pyrrhic victory, all in the Second World War. They then recovered their prosperity under the American umbrella. The Soviet Union, despite victory, had to go it alone; and the Party and the Stalinist model acquired another lease of life. It now looks as if, after attaining

the status of a mature industrial society, the ex-Soviet Union is queuing up for the Anglo-French option.

Every aspect of the Soviet experience and of the new experiments is of the deepest interest. The most obvious is the sobering thought of how expensive industrialization is; and every new study shows how shallow it is to ascribe the costs to Stalin's paranoia, to the Russian character and tradition, or to what are called by Soviet colleagues, 'mistakes'. But, for that reason itself, the new experiment at a mixed economy with pluralist political structures will be riveting.

The other and equally arresting, especially for us, is the Soviet manner of creating a single polity and society out of the bewildering multiplicity that faced the Bolsheviks in the 1920s. Their methods are extraordinarily comparable to ours. The roles of the Communist Party there and the political process dominated by the Congress here, merit the deepest comparative research. Even more then, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the numerous internal communalisms (or ethnic strife as they are often called) should be observed with sober attention. Owing to an ideological pre-occupation with or revulsion against Marxism and Leninism, we did not treat the Soviet experience with the depth it deserved; we should not repeat that 'mistake' now.

MADHAVAN K. PALAT

### Alternatives in Soviet history

NIRMAL KUMAR CHANDRA

THE Bolsheviks started with a grand vision in 1917. By abolishing private property in the basic means of production, they hoped to end the exploitation of man by man, overtake the Western countries economically, and act as a beacon light for the oppressed peoples in colonial and semi-colonial countries.

The USSR did make enormous progress. Parity in military power had been achieved by the 1950s, and the economic distance vis-a-vis the USA was narrowing till the mid-1970s. The emergence of a 'socialist' bloc of nations in Europe and Asia weakened the hegemony of capitalist imperialism. As the Soviet economy degenerated owing to internal contradictions and as several attempts at democratization were aborted, the Soviet system gradually lost its raison d'etre. Once free elections were held under Gorbachev, it collapsed within a couple of years.

Was the failure inevitable, as the 'totalitarian' school of Western scholars has consistently maintained? According to them, the 1917 revolution was an anti-democratic coup d'etat leading to a one-party state, the transition from Lenin to Stalin was a logical one, and Stalin's industrialization through forced collectivization was the corollary to the dogma of state planning; despite persistent and serious shortcomings, no radical reforms were possible because of their incompatibility with the monopoly power of the party-state.

Recent events have lent strong credence to this interpretation. This article tries to explore whether or not there were any alternatives to the actual course of history. Section I describes the political alternatives. Section II analyzes the economic alternatives to the Stalinist system of command planning that continued with minor changes till the economy began to disintegrate. The final section speculates on whether the democratization of Soviet society prior to Gorbachev had a greater chance of success, and also why it went astray under him.

#### The totalitarian model

Did the Bolsheviks act undemocratically in seizing power in November 1917? If it was a mere coup d'etat, why did the masses thwart the earlier coup by Kornilov, and not that of Lenin and Trotsky? Actually, there was a wave of mass demonstrations as chronicled by John Reed. What about the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly? In a much acclaimed recent study on peasants in the Central Volga region, Orlando Figes concludes: 'The peasant revolution of 1917-18 destroyed the power of the old regime in the countryside and undermined the anti-Bolshevik movement based upon the restoration of the Constituent Assembly....The civil war necessitated the establishment of a strong state apparatus in the provinces to organize the resources of the peasantry for the struggle against the counter-revolution.... The Neo-populists who would undoubtedly have attracted considerable peasant support under a pluralist-socialist system were forced underground or into exile during the civil war.... (On the other hand) the Russian peasantry enjoyed a period of unparalleled freedom and well-being during the 1920s.'

Next, was Stalin the logical successor to Lenin? Lenin himself had in 1922 proposed Trotsky as his deputy; later, the Politburo (PB) wanted Trotsky to deliver the Central Committee's (CC) report to the XIIth Congress owing to Lenin's illness; on both occasions Trotsky refused. He was also manipulated after Lenin's death, by Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev into agreeing that Lenin's Last Testament (virtually pleading for Stalin's removal) need not be published. Trotsky's political defeat was by no means foreordained.

I he story was more complex in the crucial years of 1928-29. As General Secretary since 1922, Stalin assiduously developed a personal network of support at all levels. Yet he was far from unassailable. Early in 1928, Stalin became vulnerable for advocating as a general policy the use of brute force in requisitioning grains. The so-called right was anticipating a working majority in the executive organs of the party with support from the trade unions, senior military leaders, and even the secret police organ, GPU. However, it lacked organization. More important, to the 20-30 top ranking old Bolsheviks who normally took the ultimate decisions, Bukharin's programme appeared rather timid, while that of Stalin appealed to their revolutionary mood. No one, including Stalin, seriously expected the turmoil that soon traumatized society despite dire warnings ex ante from Bukharin and his friends.

Even though Bukharin was humbled, Stalin was yet to emerge as the dictator. In February 1929 he failed to get Bukharin et al ejected from the PB. In the famous article of March 1930, 'Dizzy with Success', he was 'forced' to retreat by admitting excesses during collectivization, and allowing peasants to resume private farming. From 1930 to 1933

two anti-Stalin groups of Lominadze and Syrtsov, and of Eismont, Tolmachev and Smirnov, surfaced; Riutin also tried to remove him as General Secretary. In each case Stalin failed initially to get his own verdict; eventually, by-passing the regular bodies, he won partial victories.

Throughout the 1930s the party was far from monolithic. The upper ranks were divided, while the lower units were disorganized and chaotic. The division centred around three issues: the pace of industrialization, the treatment of the opposition, and the relations between the party centre and local units. The moderates included Ordzhonikidze (who was close to Bukharin all through), Kirov and Zhdanov, while the hawks counted Molotov, Ezhov, Beria, etcetera.

Did the 1934 Party Congress mark the final victory of Stalin? Was it not officially declared that there was no one to fight within the party? Yet out of a total of about 1200 delegates, nearly 300 voted against Stalin, whereas only three opposed Kirov. The moderates' views prevailed over the Congress; old opposition leaders like Bukharin, Zinoviev and Kamenev spoke and were cheered; and Kirov was inducted into the PB. But then he was assassinated in December 1934. Stalin launched his purges thereafter.

Subsequently, there were attempts to democratize society through the 1936 Constitution and introduce within the party elections with multiple candidates and secret votes, in which Zhdanov took the lead. At party meetings in many localities, the ordinary members roundly condemned the local bosses and removed them. This must have scared many senior leaders, and the hawks prevailed upon the CC to call off the exercise in October 1937. But intraparty strife continued. The PB or CC, it appears, was sharply divided over the question of Terror or its continuation on several occasions between December 1936 and January 1938 when it was decided that the main danger to the party came, not from enemies inside, but from 'the threat of war'. Nevertheless, Stalin's

supremacy remained unchallenged, and the Terror was re-enacted after World War II.

Now a few words about the Terror. Soviet archival materials published in the last couple of years indicate that the peasant exiles, and inmates in prisons as well as in the Gulag camps and colonies, taken together did not exceed 3.0 million at any time up to 1945, but rose steeply to around 5.0 million by 1953. Recorded mortality in these places stood at 1.4 million in 1932-47; these figures exclude certain years as well as deaths in prisons and Gulag colonies; one does not know how many died 'unnaturally'. On famine deaths in 1932-34, the current Western estimates based on the latest demographic data range from 5.0 to 7.0 million.

Over the period 1929-38, Stalin was also a 'revolutionary transformer'. Five-year schooling became compulsory; for every three peasants entering a collective or state farm during the First Plan, one became an industrial worker; even among the peasant deportees, over one million were engaged in industrial jobs; throughout the 1930s, one to two million young adults from villages joined the non-agricultural labour force every year; with the number of white collar workers jumping from 4 to 14 million, millions from the lower strata joined the intelligentsia.

The phenomenon of Stalinism is thus exceedingly complex. Stalin, in the words of Churchill, 'inherited a Russia with a wooden plough, and left it with atomic weapons'. Adzhubei, the son-in-law of Khrushchev, recalls that after Stalin's death, there was 'a widespread feeling of vulnerability. "He can do everything, he will find the correct solution"; that was how people thought'. As Nove put it, 'Clearly, this was not just a matter of combination of terror and propaganda.'

Returning to the totalitarian model, it fails to explain how millions were freed shortly after Stalin died, not to speak of the momentous changes initiated at the xxth Party Congress. Khrushchev took enormous personal risks in making his secret speech at the Congress, and

even afterwards one major attempt was made in 1957 to unseat him. To quote Burlatsky, 'He walked on two legs, one marching boldly into the new epoch, the other totally stuck in the mud of the past.' During his tenure punishment without a trial was abolished, pensions were raised, peasants were relieved of many onerous taxes, and the housing situation improved. In cultural life there was a thaw. But Khrushchev had his drawbacks. His diatribes against modern, abstract art and disapproval of Pasternak, put the clock back. On policy matters he sought the views of many scientists and experts, but often leaned heavily on his favourites, including those with a dubious reputation like Lysenko. Not without reason Khrushchev was accused of spawning hare-brained schemes.

A hese weaknesses were exploited by his opponents whose ranks were swelled by men he himself had promoted, e.g. Kozlov, Suslov, and Brezhnev. For the upper echelons of the nomenklatura felt quite insecure owing to Khrushchev's programme of reform in economic and party administration, and constant change of personnel. That 85 of the 101 newcomers to the CC in 1961 retained their seats in 1966, corroborates the conspiracy hypothesis. Another major factor was Khrushchev's anti-military image. By stressing upon 'firepower' rather than the size of the Red Army, he antagonized the 'the army great coats' like Zhukov. The partial test ban treaty with the USA in 1963 was anathema to the military establishment in both countries. Indeed. the 'defence establishment may have exerted greater influence on Brezhnev than on his predecessors.

Despite his faults Khrushchev was recently called the 'Last Romantic'. By freeing millions from the Gulag and peasant settlements, he earned enormous popular support. When he died several years after losing power, 'the authorities took elaborate measures to stop people from attending his funeral'.

#### 16 Alternatives to Stalinist planning

The dominant view among Western scholars like Carr, Dobb, Nove,

Davies and so on, has upheld Stalin's perspective on industrialization. If resources were to be garnered for investment leading to highspeed industrialization, one could not pay the market price for surplus grains with the kulaks; ergo forced collectivization. Bukharin's alternative has, however, gained many adherents in the last two decades. Grain procurement could be ensured through a more rational pricing of grains, and by maintaining adequate stocks, replenished whenever necessary by import or a cut in grain export. With the economy already expanding rapidly from 1924-25 to 1927-28, many consumer goods were in short supply, and state reserves of key resources had vanished; besides, there were enormous wastes in the use of scarce materials and equipment. A sudden attempt to raise the tempo would, Bukharin felt, succeed only for a while, necessarily followed by deceleration. In reality, agricultural output stagnated all through the Stalin era, and peasants destroyed half the livestock after collectivization.

Industrial output, however, expanded at an astonishing rate. Bukharin's alternative would certainly have avoided the agricultural disaster, especially the famine of 1932-34: peasants would have had no reason to slaughter the draught animals and hence the pace of tractorization (which consumed half the output of quality steel in 1933) could have been slowed down, releasing steel for machine building, etc. If in industry and construction cost reduction was duly emphasised, if the bourgeois specialists were not alienated, and if the counter-productive Gulag never came into being, it is quite possible that incremental output and investment at the end of the 1930s would have been no lower than the actual. Moreover, in Bukharin's alternative the market equilibrium would have been maintained with the state playing dominant role; and in the absence of growth mania and with adequate stocks of different key resources. there would have been no need for their central allocation which, one may point out, was the cornerstone of Stalinist planning.

The problem of integrating the

market with planning surfaced repeatedly. Even before the First Plan was over, a debate on the socialist market was promoted by Ordzhonikidze. It focused on *khozraschet*, i.e. a strict profit and loss calculus, and the desirability of direct trade relation between state enterprises without recourse to centralized allocation. But the debate was soon terminated by the PB.

Although many scholars find Stalin's 1952 essay, 'Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR', rather banal, Oskar Lange felt that it opened up discussions on a wide front like the agricultural price policy, equilibrium in the market for consumer goods generally, and the consequent impact on the investment plan. A big debate on the 'law of value under socialism' actually started soon afterwards.

Did Khrushchev try out an alternative model? By disbanding the machine tractor stations, and through industrial reorganization, he struck at the centralized power structure rather than the economic mechanism. More radical changes were signalled by the debate around Liberman's famous 1962 article in the Pravda, which proposed that firms should maximize profits rather than fulfil Gosplan's production targets, and that the central allocation system be replaced by direct contracts between enterprises. Somewhat limited experiments were actually carried out. Many economists and administrators apprehended, however, that in the absence of command planning, the rate of growth would slacken. On the other hand, leading Soviet economic reformers of the 1960s argued that the whole system would collapse without a drastic overhaul.

A major problem with the reforms was that too many prices were far below costs. If food prices, for instance, were raised significantly, there could be popular unrest as in East Germany and Poland in the 1950s. The only safeguard is the existence of a democratic government enjoying mass support. Indeed, a comparison between the reaction of the Poles under Walesa and under earlier

communist leaders, confirms this conjecture. In any case, so long as the growth rate in these countries remained high, creating the illusion of catching up, the party was in no mood to relinquish its monopoly control.

Well before Gorbachev came to power, the USSR was slipping behind the West in every field other than defence. From about 1978 there was no economic growth at all. Gorbachev's remedy was perestroika and glasnost: (a) open discussion about the past was essential for democratization; (b) the nomenklatura consisting of about two million persons, had to be disbanded; (c) economic restructuring meant introducing market relations, creating a new incentive system for all so that each person earned according to his contribution, minimizing waste of resources (goods and labour), and speeding up technical progress; and (d) the defence outlays (already accounting for a fantastic 15-30% of the national income) had to be severely reduced by negotiating disarmament with the USA. Are these questions not strikingly similar to those raised by Bukharin or Ordzhonikidze?

Reforms were undertaken in earnest by 1987. Yet, as we all know, the economic situation worsened over the years. National income fell by 5% in 1989 and 10% in 1990. A recent report in The Guardian, New York (also in the Frontier, 7.12.91), is more alarming; in the first few months of 1991, the GNP declined by 12%, and the service sectors by 17%; the projected 1992 production could fall below the subsistence minimum. Inflation accelerated. In 1984-89 export to hard currency areas plummeted by 20%, while debts doubled to over \$ 52 billion.

#### The question of democracy

Major reforms, it was shown earlier, would be initially painful; thus democratization is a sine qua non. One may recall that Stalin took some initial steps in this direction during 1935-37, but withdrew the gamble. Some scholars believe that democratization would have inexorably led to capitalist restoration since the advanced capitalist states

have always been far ahead of the 'socialist' countries. Paul Baran, too, advanced the notion of underdeveloped socialism and ascribed the deformities of Stalinism to the imperatives of industrializing a backward country.

Duch contextual explanation contains a large element of truth, but is far from sufficient. One may first recall the finding of Figes cited earlier. In the late 1920s, if the peasant had to choose between the Bolsheviks and a return to a Kerensky-type regime, can one have reasonable doubts about the outcome? None of the Neo-populist regimes in East or South Europe in the inter-war period were able to match the success of Bolsheviks either in land reforms or in industrial growth of the 1920s. If Bukharin had prevailed over the party, popular support would have been strengthened. If in the mid-1930s Stalin could have been ousted, and the new leaders had emptied the Gulag camps, restored peasant farming, pursued a more balanced agricultural price policy etcetera, it is by no means certain that the reformed socialists would have been rejected. One more chance came before Brezhnev rose to power. By opening up the prisons, and by raising the living standards, the leadership had earned enormous goodwill. The slogan of catching up with the West economically was still credible. Lastly, the phenomenal achievements in the military sphere (atomic and nuclear bombs, sputnik and Gagarin, the astronaut) raised national pride to dizzy heights; people seemed confident that neither their corpus of scientists nor their social system was inferior to any in the world.

That voting pattern is strongly influenced by the contextual factors is common knowledge. While the communists lost the elections under Gorbachev, an opinion poll conducted by American scholars before 1985 tells a different story. The sample of around 2800 was carefully selected from over 100,000 Soviet refugees arriving in the USA in 1979-82. Of the respondents only 27% had emigrated for economic reasons, the rest came for ethnic/religious reasons; more than 60% had been satisfied with their Soviet

standard of living; 31% opposed state ownership in industry; 74% preferred private agriculture; and under 10% wanted to dismantle economic planning. An American scholar concluded: 'The overall responses point to a desire for more political and economic diversity and for broader civil rights; only a few... were prepared to repudiate entirely the Soviet political, economic, and social system' (emphasis added).

At this stage, I can only speculate on why the USSR disintegrated. The Soviet leadership, including Gorbachev, was obviously unequal to the task of socialist renewal. Lured by Western adulation of perestroika and glasnost, Gorbachev and his entourage were probably oblivious that nationalism or the swadeshi spirit that had enthused generations of Soviet leaders had evaporated by the early 1970s when the country began to look upon Western imports as a panacea for technological backwardness in civilian sectors. Since the system was petrified, the imports were poorly assimilated, and the hiatus persisted. Furthermore, systematic trade discrimination by the West had a crippling effect on Soviet manufacturing, and there has been no relaxation to this day. Lastly, meaningful disarmament took place only when the USSR embraced the ideology of privatization and conceded American hegemony. The internal weaknesses of the Soviet leadership accentuated by the Western policy of unremitting economic warfare, paralyzed the USSR. Even if Gorbachev had taken all these factors into account, it is by no means certain that he could salvage the Soviet system, steering it in a democratic, socialist direction.

The Soviet debacle has a simple moral for third world countries that wish to pursue a non-capitalist path of development; they are likely to be denied access to Western markets, and may also have to reckon with various forms of economic warfare. This is a formidable deterrent even for a large country, not to speak of the small ones. Without overwhelming support from the masses, it would be foolhardy for a third world government to launch such an experiment.

# Systemic change & systematic collapse

ANURADHA M. CHENOY

THE attempt to reform the Soviet system led to its collapse. The revolution from above initiated secessionism from below. The search for 'real socialism' led to the demise of barracks socialism and a groping toward capitalism.

Did the system break down because of the kind of reforms initiated by Gorbachev? Or the manner in which they were implemented? Or was the break down due to long-term weaknesses of the Soviet system? A brief analysis of the reforms and the processes which emerged as their consequences, would show that it was the conjuncture of the objective and the subjective contradictions—the long-term accumulation of weaknesses and short-term methods of their resolution, which broke the Soviet Union into 15 independent Republics.

Gorbachev, the key actor in this historic drama, emerged out of the highly unified network of the Soviet political structure. He was installed in power because the Central Committee felt that a younger and dynamic

mic leader was necessary (especially after the death of two general secretaries in quick succession), for stopping the gradual Soviet decline. Trends from the late Brezhnev period pointed to economic stagnation, falling growth rates and increasing technological gaps vis-a-vis the West. The Soviet system was running into problems in meeting the requirements of a modern industrial state with superpower status.

Controversies surround the method of Gorbachev's reforms of perestroika, glasnost and demokratita. But this does not detract from the fundamental issue, that reform was essential for the Soviet system. Gorbachev's reforms were not evolutionary or systematic, they attacked the system from all sides and a number of issues were raised simultaneously. We delineate eight problem areas which Gorbachev confronted and examine his policies and their consequences in these spheres.

1. Having emerged from the party bureaucracy, Gorbachev needed their support. He convinced the party apparatus that without reform, the very survival of the system was at stake. Since the party apparatchiki lacked their own thought-out programme, they fell in with Gorbachev's proposals.

2. The fate of earlier reformers like Khrushchev made clear to Gorbachev and his team, that the party apparatus could clamp down on a reformer with considerable ease. Gorbachev was aware of the short time at his disposal. He was thus convinced of the need to keep the public informed. This was done through the policy of 'openness' which he felt would help mobilize people for reform, and initiate a communication revolution in the Soviet Union.

With this policy, official Soviet claims about the resolution of basic human problems, were exposed as exaggerated. A system which brooked no internal dissent, not only lifted press censorship, but was critiqued by the head of state. The gaps between socialist theory and practice were revealed. These revelations were meant to encourage discussions on the reforms and revelations changes. This, however, initiated the course of delegitimizing the Communist Party and the very basis of the Soviet system.

3. Gorbachev considered that a crucial problem underlying the Soviet system was the bureaucracy. He criticized 'bureaucratic control' and the 'command and administer' system (common in economic and political structures). Gorbachev blamed the bureaucracy for blocking the reforms and sabotaging the economy.

The bureaucracy comprised 18 million people, with functions at every level of organized life. They functioned like a grid in Soviet society and proved too widespread a phenomenon to root out. Gorbachev attacked individual manifestations of this system, but in practice relied on this system. The reformers did not possess the cadres necessary for a reforming regime. They hoped for a split in the bureaucracy between pro-reformers and anti-reformers. This split did not take the shape envisaged by the reformers. The bureaucracy they attacked, was the bureaucracy they continued to

rely upon. The reforms were thus not only restricted by the apparatus but also constricted by it.

4. The reforms brought the ethnic problems to the forefront. The demand from the Baltics for independence was the most serious issue, promising to put an early end to perestroika. Gorbachev appointed a commission to look into the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact, which brought the Baltics into the Soviet Union. The condemnation of this pact as 'illegal and invalid', by the Congress of Peoples Deputies in December 1989, endorsed the demand for secession, instead of healing old wounds. Lithuania declared independence in March 1990, followed by similar demands by Latvia and Estonia. Gorbachev resorted to negotiations, clamping down on the movement, and international pressure, but there was no way he could quell the rising tide of nationalism.

Continuation of the system of internal passports, and the necessity of declaring regional statehood revealed the continuing problems of ethnicity, despite perestroika's intention to solve these. Further nationalist uprisings in Ukraine and Georgia, and inter-ethnic clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave, indicated that reforms were aggravating ethnic nationalism.

The demand for independence was not restricted to the Baltics. Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Ukraine, voiced this demand. This was followed up by popular movements and election of leaders proposing this issue. A referendum on the Union proposed by Gorbachev in March 1991 was backed essentially by the Russians and the Muslim Central Asian states. But the Baltics and others refused to participate. Perestroika offered no solution to this issue.

5. 'Acceleration of economic growth' outlined during the 27th Party Congress, was Gorbachev's strategy for tackling stagnation and over-centralization. Decrees were issued for autonomy of enterprises and collectives. Anti-alcohol campaigns and a struggle against unearned incomes was launched. These

initiatives were abruptly stopped, since they led to a decline in government revenues and proved unpopular. Decrees on cooperatives and autonomy helped little, and remained workable only on paper. Shortages increased. The domestic consumer demand in 1990-91, for instance, fell short by 70 billion roubles. Official statistics revealed for the first time that 28% of the population lived below the official poverty line of 100 roubles a month. Gorbachev shifted to one economic strategy after another. After abandoning Abalkin's programme for a transitional economy, he used Shatalin's plans and the 500-day plan (supported by the radical liberals). But clearly the system itself was blocking out the changes necessary to modernize it.

6. Gorbachev and his team were convinced that 'military overstretch' had led to deep internal crisis of the Soviet system. Soviet control over East Europe, the necessity of maintaining an ideological wall vis-a-vis the West, sustenance of a system of alliances in a crisis-ridden third world, and conservation of superpower status had led to a spiralling arms race with disastrous effects. The Soviet economy had become lopsided, with a very high defence account. Up to 40% of the budget was linked to defence expenditure. Technological upgradation was concentrated in the defence sector. The consumer sector was continually neglected. Moreover, as Gorbachev stressed, the consciousness of the Soviet people had got militarized.

To resolve this, Gorbachev advocated deideologization, disarmament and confidence-building with the West. The ensuing result of this policy was Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, East European revolutions, new bridges with the West and other 'hostile' states.

These changes which transformed the basis of international relations, were criticized by the conservatives at home because of the loss of superpower status, which had for long sustained the internal bureaucracy. Moreover, these changes did not substantially improve the internal economic situation. This was because large parts of the army in

Bast Europe had to be demobilized and reorganized within the Soviet Union. Though a cut in defence expenditure was planned, this had to be systematic. Conversion of the military sector to the consumer takes time and is not necessarily viable. The Soviets temporarily lost markets and trade with East Europe. Gorbachev's foreign policy successes thus helped his image internally only for a limited period of time.

7. Gorbachev and his team had inherited a highly integrated political structure. The party apparatus had for over 70 years controlled all key institutions. In this process, these institutions had jelled together. The state, government, administration and civil society were held together by one institution—the party apparatus. Unity of thought and tight control had removed all nuances of flexibility. In fact, this gave the system a false appearance of strength, when actually it was highly brittle.

Torbachev emphasized the democratization of the political system as an essential aspect of reform. Electoral reforms, a system of rule of law under the concept of 'socialist law-based state', transfer of power from party bodies to the elected soviets and other institutional changes were introduced. An element of choice crept into the local soviet elections of 1987. Voters at large showed a keen interest in the 1989 elections to the Congress of Peoples Deputies, despite the intricate procedure. The result of this election were sensational, especially since a number of leading party and state officials were defeated (for example the Mayors of Moscow and Kiev and Party First Secretaries of Kiev, Minsk, Kishinev, Alma-Ata, Frunze and Leningrad). All this indicated that an element of pluralism had made inroads into the old undifferentiated system. A nascent civil society began to develop. State-guided political culture started giving way to a differentiated and plural one.

But despite the development of some democratic movements, no significant political structures arose at the national level. Workers and miners strikes were spontaneous and their links with the democratic move-

ments were weak. The CPSU continued to dominate political life, though factions developed within it. This lack of non-governmental, civil or alternative political institutions, led to the reinforcement of traditional institutions like church and mosque and ethnic and regional loyalties.

At the republican level, political parties and popular fronts formed around sectarian issues. Given the quick delegitimization of the Communist Party, nationalist causes filled the political space which had been created. In many instances, the Communist ruling leadership realized the shift in political aspirations and the pressure for nationalist demands. These leaders shifted positions (in Georgia, Ukraine, etcetera) and became leaders of new nationalist political formations.

Perestroika thus did not encourage the development of a popular mass front. Y. Yakovlev stated that there was no 'single influential mass movement on which the supporters of Perestroika could rely' (Moscow News, 17 June 1990). Despite political reform, no political formation appropriate to the political life of the Soviet Union emerged. At the same time, the support bases and legitimacy of the single structure which held up the Soviet Union, was being hacked away by the centrist leadership and by the growing opposition.

8. The reform led to changes within the CPSU, in a direction not envisaged by the reformers. Instead of cutting down the party apparatus, antagonistic factions developed within the CPSU leadership. The three main groups who battled for control of central power, were Gorbachev and the centrists, the conservatives and the radical liberals. The conservatives represented the interest of traditional Soviet structures like the party-state apparatus, army and the KGB. They had envisaged modernization without significant changes in social or structural relations. Gorbachev removed some stalwarts of this group like Y. Ligachev. Most of them, however, continued to control state institutions.

The radical liberals were the product of perestroika, and jumped the

queue on reform. They criticized the slow pace of reform and asked for a speedy transition to the market system. The Democratic Platform which emerged during the 28th Congress in 1990 as the organization of the liberals, did not have a clear strategy or organizational position. It appeared that the liberals were not sure of the kind of political space they could occupy. Their links with the Republics were weak, and they lacked a structural organization and mass support. Though important personalities formed part of this group (A. Sobchak, G. Popov, S. Shatalin and others), politics continued to be based on personality rather than on a party.

Veltsin often acted independently of his base. He urged for direct presidential elections for the Russian Federation, which he saw as his main hope of achieving legitimate power and out-maneeuvring Gorbachev. This proposal was carried through in the March 1991 referendum, and Yeltsin prepared for a successful popular election—a feat which Gorbachev could not achieve. The fact that Yeltsin made a direct appeal to the people, improved his image and legitimacy vis-a-vis that of Gorbachev.

As the overall crisis in the Soviet Union increased, Gorbachev veered towards the conservatives, despite appeals from friends and advisors. E. Shevardnadze and A. Yakovlev warned of the possibility of a coup, and resigned their positions. Gorbachev's new security council in 1991 consisted of hardliners and conservatives like Vice-President Yanaev, Prime Minister Pavlov, KGB Chief Kryuchkov and Minister for Internal Affairs Pugo. It may be argued that at this crucial stage, Gorbachev moved towards the conservatives because he sought to maintain some continuity with past structures so as to avoid a complete rupture with the Soviet past, which Yeltsin was striving for. Moreover, it appeared that after the initial reform the structural prerequisites for further radicalization did not exist. The reforms had at this stage begun to stagnate. Gorbachev also felt that the only way to curb the conserva-tives was to form an alliance with them. Gorbachev thus moved from radical positions to conservative ones.

At this stage (early 1991), both the conservatives and liberals relied on Gorbachev for controlling the centre, since their survival and the survival of the system depended on this. The political situation was in continuous flux. Economic hardship, political confusion, and ethnic disputes led to an apocalyptic vision amongst the people. Results of a poll amongst them showed that a large number envisioned civil war or political chaos.

All these factors combined to make a highly combustible situation. The centre was losing its credibility and political control. In these circumstances, Gorbachev advocated the Union treaty as a life-belt for the drowning Soviet Union.

The Union treaty sought to restructure the Federation, to give more autonomy to the units. The Baltics, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia resisted the Union treaty, and favoured independence. Their leaders spoke from a position of strength, since they had popular mandates or referendum backing them. Yeltsin's success in the June 1991 direct elections for the Russian presidency, established him in a dominant position. The Union parliament wanted to be a separate party to the treaty. The Speaker of the parliament Lukyanov, was asked to look after the 'interests' of the parliament.

The talks in Novo-Ogarevo were not clear on the question of division of power or property between the centre and confederating units. Gorbachev proposed a three-tier system, to be organized with the centre, Republics and autonomous regions. Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine opposed this system, which would equate the autonomies with the Republics. Nonetheless, negotiations concluded in August with the proposal for the formal signing of the treaty on 21st August.

This event sharpened the existing contradictions, and the liberals and conservatives consolidated their positions. The liberals wanted a swifter move towards marketization and a looser confederation with a minimum role for the centre. The conservatives accused Gorbachev of going too far. They felt the Union treaty would break the Soviet Union. The conservatives then decided on a hastily-organized coup against Gorbachev. On 18 August, the 'State Committee for the Emergency', ordered Gorbachev's arrest, and seized control of a centre which had already disintegrated.

Y eltsin, the legitimate and popularly elected President of the Russian Federation led the internationally telecast resistance. Spontaneous public support, refusal by the army and KGB to resort to force, Gorbachev's resistance during confinement, and international pressure, led to the quick surrender of the putschists, most of whom had been Gorbachev's recent allies. The failure of the coup did not help Gorbachev's discredited image, particularly as it showed that despite perestroika the party had not changed. In fact, Gorbachev's last ditch defence of the CPSU in his televized address in the Russian parliament, further isolated him from public opinion. The Communist Party and conservatives had completely lost their control over the Soviet state. The coup hastened the process of collapse which had already set in.

The coup established that power had shifted from the centre to the Republics. The main trends after the coup were: the search by several Republics (Baltics, Ukraine, Moldova), for independence; a further decline and dismantling of Union institutions like the Congress of Peoples Deputies and banning of the CPSU; and a determined attempt by Yeltsin to hold on to the power he had gained after the coup, and to sideline Gorbachev and the Union government at any cost. The last trend hastened the pace of the first two, and led to the ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union. Yeltsin realized that a system of dual power would continue to survive in Russia as long as the centre continued. He could not gain complete control unless Gorbachev had been removed.

Baltic independence seemed inevitable after the coup. But this also

proved a watershed for other Republics. Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia repeated their demand with new force. Gorbachev's attempts to establish a 'common economic space' and loose economic confederation, were sidelined by Yeltsin and the Slav states.

The resolution by the Slav states on ending the Soviet Union and establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was a move to outmanoeuvre the centre and Gorbachev-an instrument to remove Gorbachev and the Union. It ended the search of these leaders for complete control of their Republics—now established as independent states. The hastily patched agreement later included the Central Asian states and other Republics as founder-states. Though these states were initially aggrieved at having been left out of the CIS they were compensated by the loose terms of agreement signed on 21 December at Alma-Ata. Moreover, they had received independence on a platter an almost painless birth on easy

The collapse of the Soviet Union leaves a vacuum in the international political system. The Soviet Union played an important role against imperialism and Western expansionism. It supported national liberation movements and assisted in the development of several third world countries, which found themselves against the Western bloc of countries.

This superpower role had contradictory effects on Soviet society. It provided the necessary power and status for the party and state bureaucracy to further its domination of the system. But it proved a heavy and oppressive burden on the Soviet people. All excesses and undemocratic procedures were legitimized because anti-capitalism formed the permanent context and main point of reference in Soviet history. Anticapitalism meant a spiralling arms race and an expenditure burden which the Soviet system could no longer endure. It also meant wholesale rejection of values attached to the liberal-democratic tradition, whether it was human rights, the market

or the green movement. The Soviet system was not allowed to evolve or adopt democratic traditions or political pluralism. All this worked against the individual and in favour of the military industrial complex.

It was these shortcomings which Gorbachev sought to remove. His reforming strategy was uneven and paradoxical. He shifted positions and vecred from left to right, resulting in loss of credibility. He did not resort to direct elections in time to acquire legitimacy. He cut into his own support base. But the reasons for this also lie in the circumstances under which he worked and the kind of material he handled. He lacked an agency to carry out the reform. Despite the rise of radical reformers, no viable alternative was offered by anyone else. Gorbachev attacked the institutions which formed the grid which held the system together. This system could not tolerate radical changes, leave alone revolution. History has repeatedly shown that no serious social change takes place without intense struggle between social forces. In the Soviet Union the momentum of change led to systemic collapse.

The independent states which have arisen from the ashes of the Soviet Union, continue to carry the burden of the past. The central position of Russia, the unified structure of the economy, the multi-ethnicity in each republic, the continuation of old structures like bureaucracy, military and consciousness of the Soviet past, mixed with rising ideologies of nationalism and religious revivalism, will present new challenges to these states. In addition, new disputes between these states on territory, joint command of the army and property of the Soviet Union will create the basis for new antagonisms.

The transition to a market economy has never proved to be an easy task. Current trends including Western and Japanese initiatives to dominate multilateral institutions including GATT and the UN, do not augur well for such an effort. Thus the already growing problems of the CIS are likely to be accentuated. The new Commonwealth may well turn out to be an unstable and transitory phenomenon.

Yeltsin's parliament and Russia's politics

HARI VASUDEVAN

AFTER the events of 19 to 22 August 1991, administrative authority in the Russian Federation passed to the President and the main parties in parliament. Until then, as ex-Russian President Vorotnikov pointed out, these were impotent institutions. But the clear involvement of Union ministers in the putsch placed almost all those who were powerful in Union bodies under suspicion. And it created a situation where public men, who hitherto nominally exerted administrative authority in the Rus-

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sian Republic, could wield real power.

Since September itself, though, actions taken by the Russian President and statements made by the country's officials have raised questions concerning their commitment to the issue so crucial to their justification of assumption of wide administrative powers after 22 August. i.e. the protection of public participation in organs of government. But leading figures in parliament are reluctant to initiate moves against the President's administration on these grounds, despite their regular assertion of democratic principles and their avowed solidarity with the cause of 'the people'.

The crisis faced by the President and his associates at the April Congress of Deputies, and what has happened subsequently, shows that deputies are anxious to preserve the Presidency whatever its flaws, and whatever their democratic proclivities. There can be no other explanation for the capitulation of Ruslan Khasbulatov and other rebel democrats following the threat of resignation by the Presidential cabinet.

At the root of parliament's behaviour is the reluctance of politicians to excite a constitutional crisis in the uncertain circumstances in which Russia has been placed before and after the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States. There are also differences of opinion among liberals and radicals regarding what is appropriate executive response in existing circumstances. An equally fundamental reason is the acceptance by parliament's most powerful blocs — the Democratic Russia (Demokraticheskaia Rossiia) forum and the Movement for Democratic Reforms (Dvizhenie Demokraticheskikh Reform)—that members of the public are not the best source of support for representative institutions as they exist.

Undoubtedly, public participation in government bodies and adequate respect for elected institutions is an important part of the political platform of Democratic Russia, which commands the support of about 45%

of Russian deputies. This is especially true of the core of the bloc, the Democratic Party of Russia (led by Nikolai Travkin and Stanislav Shatalin). Supporters of the bloc were members of dissident groups concerned with civil rights, social activists who began their public life under perestroika. Leaders of Democratic Russia formed popular front organizations in several parts of the country on the eve of the 'primaries' for the 1989 Union elections: in industrial regions of European Russia, in Yaroslav, Moscow, Kalinin and Leningrad; in Stavropol, in Siberia (in Tomsk and Chelyabinsk), and in remote areas such as Orel. They were prominent in democratic clubs and voters associations (such as the Moscow Association of Voters, with its 30 district clubs).

Through such organizations, they presented non-CPSU candidates at elections, brought voters out to electoral meetings, and raised campaign funds for non-official candidates. They hoped to increase public interest and participation in elections and institutions. In the heavily contested election for the chairmanship of the Russian Supreme Soviet, Democratic Russia was responsible for pressing the candidature of Boris Yeltsin, the anti-CPSU candidate.

Members of the bloc have established separate parties since the elections of 1990 (such as the Social Democratic Party). But their allegiance to the forum still prevails. And when some of these bodies formed the nine-party accord of 28th November between parliamentarians and Boris Yeltsin, it was undoubtedly a reflection on Democratic Russia.

Less committed to political pluralism, the Movement for Democratic Reforms (where Gavriil Popov, Alexander Yakovlev, Eduard Shevarnadze and Anatoly Sobchak are leaders of the executive) forms a good portion of the Russian parliament. Most are reformers of the CPSU who broke with M. S. Gorbachev, Ivashko and other members of the Politburo in July 1991, when the anti-pluralist lobby, hostile to Russia's 'meeting democracy' (in ex-Prime Minister Ryzhkov's words),

began to gain ground in the CPSU. Some figures in the Movement have an even longer history of reformism: Alexander Yakovlev and Gavriil Popov are linked with the Khrushchev reforms. Recently members of the pro-Gorbachev group in the CPSU have joined the Movement after the suspension of the CPSU in August.

The Dvizhenie has considerable influence, and its conference on 14 December was attended by 26 parties, 23 'movements' and social organizations, and 6 trade unions. Stanislav Shatalin of Democratic Russia is a prominent member of the Movement; but most members were less radical and willing to work with a one-party government and evolve means of reform. They regularly expressed a preference, though, for the emergence of a multi-party political system in the former Soviet Union.

L ogether, Democratic Russia and the Movement for Democratic Reforms have formed the basis of President Yeltsin's support in the Russian parliament since 22 August. And they have continued to do so since the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The Movement for Democratic Reforms is even projected as the President's party. Minor groups in the Supreme Soviet (Liberal Democrats, Social Democrats, Anarcho-Syndicalists and former members of the Russian Communist Party) are not able to provide a counterweight to these blocs. But on the crucial issue of President Yeltsin's decision to send troops into Checheno-Ingushetia (in October), Democratic Russia and the Movement for Democratic Reforms parted ways with the President. Yeltsin's plans for Banking Reform met a similar fate Democrats argued that the executive was making a bid to control crucial resources to make it independent of Parliament.

President Yeltsin was unrepentant on his views on executive power. Announcing a package of reforms at the end of October, he called for 'harsh measures to deal with actions which hinder economic reform', leaving no doubt about who would take the harsh measures. His First Deputy Prime Minister, and personal friend, Gennady Burbulis, argues for greater powers for the President. And presidential representatives (vice regents or namestniki), faced with opposition from elected local bodies in Tomsk, Tambov, Ulyanovsk and elsewhere, demand firm action against these organs.

n Tomsk, the namestnik Sulashkin (a former leader of the Republican Party of Russia, which had some links with Democratic Russia) argues that 'democratic methods of government are possible only when the social system of production, distribution and consumption which goes with them is also democratized', which he does not consider to be the case as yet in Russia. He regards democratic methods in current circumstances as 'simply dangerous': he argues that they lead to unruliness, chaos and a lack of control' and that they imply 'ineffectiveness in the implementation of reforms'. Sulashkin feels the country needs, 'a period of authoritarian style of government....'

Critics of Yeltsin's administration occasionally focus on such issues. They parade themselves as the champions of democracy: as witness, for instance, Otto Latsis' legend in Izvestiia for an interview of Shatalin—'the people are wiser than politicians think'. But they reserve their strictures for aspects of economic policy and price reform. Vice President Rutskoi's barbs have been aimed at economic policy. And this is substantially true of statements by R. Khasbulatov (Chairman of the Supreme Soviet) in January. Yeltsin's attempts to curb the development of self-government in the provinces and in far-flung regions of the Federation does not attract serious comment, except among a small minority such as Elena Bonner, who argued recently in Izvestiia (24 January), that 'the West must recognize the right to self determination of Osetiia, Nagorno-Karabakh and the Pri-Dniester Republic, to encourage members of the Commonwealth to follow such a democratic course....

them reluctant to take firm-measures against the Russian executive. As Il'ya Roitman of the Democratic Party of Russia points out, president and deputies had a common objective, 'the struggle against the totali-tarian regime'. 'At that stage, the incumbent Russian President, then the leader of the democratic movement, enjoyed immense credibility. He was neither offered nor expected to produce specific programmes: it was enough to know that he was acting in the spirit of common objectives.' But this has led to problems. The political parties now find themselves in the role of hostages to this credibility credit'. Since, at the end of November, they pledged their support to Yeltsin, criticism addressed to him is occasionally perceived as "betraying their interests".'

Loreover, the public image of parliamentary parties is poor. - Infighting in the Supreme Soviet, a plethora of parties (which, in December, included factions of Democratic Russia, fractions such as 'Russia'; 'The Left Centre for Radical Democracy', 'Communists of Russia', 'The Agricultural Union', 'Change', 'Sovereignty and Equality', 'The Industrial Union', 'The All Russian Union', 'the United Fraction of Social Democrats of Russia and the Republican Party of Russia' etcetera) earn parliament the reputation of a lunatic asylum, where parties are made and re-made, and where there is eternal mud-slinging. Deputies were elected in lacklustre elections in 1990, where there was poor voter response. Their measures against the executive might not earn general approval.

The so-called 'Solzhenitsyn' group among radical publicists and parliamentarians (associated with the 'Novy Mir' and with the 'letter of the 14' which appeared in Komsomolskaya Pravda and other newspapers in September 1991) is not concerned with issues of specific legal rights and the exact status of self-government and devolution. Sympathizers are preoccupied with 'tradition' and 'spiritual values'. And this has catered to Yeltsin and his vice-regents.

In 'Rebuilding Russia', published in Komsomolskaya Pravda and Literaturnaya Gazeta in September 1990, Solzhenitsyn argued that 'a potentially strong presidency will prove useful' to deal with the country's pressing problems, and that 'it is simply not feasible for us to attempt resolving issues of government structure' in existing circumstances. Stating point blank that 'the structure of the state is secondary to the spirit of human relations', and that 'the more energetic the political activity in a country the greater is the loss to spiritual life', Solzhenitsyn agreed with Sergei Levitsky that the essence of democracy consisted of 'individual freedom and a government of laws' to be distinguished from 'its secondary, non-mandatory features, namely the parliamentary system and universal suffrage'.

Other statements in his discussion of secret ballot, representation and electoral procedures indicated that the author did not hold codes of democratic practice to be sacrosanct since they were all liable to misuse. Hence, the secret ballot 'facilitates insincerity' and is 'an unfortunate necessity born of fear'; voting, 'whatever the method of tabulating the results, does not represent a quest for truth'. Solzhenitsyn expressed contempt for the Russian public, which, he asserted, lacks that 'certain level of political discipline' essential for the functioning of democracy. And in all this, both he and his supporters provide the theoretical and ideological foundations for the tendencies evident in the actions of President Yeltsin and his supporters.

The principles stated by Solzhenitsyn go against the position taken by the 'Sakharov' group of publicists and parliamentarians. This includes the 'Independent Civic Initiative' of Iu. Afanas'ev, L. Batkin V. Bibler, E. Bonner, Iu. Burtin, Vyach Vs. Ivanov and L. Timofeev, who published a statement in the paper Demokraticheskaia Rossiia, warning against the Russian government's lack of interest in new civil institutions, and its excessive attention to national policy. They took the stand that the new Russia might be the heir of Tsarist and Soviet 'great power aspirations'. And they expres-

sed alarm regarding 'revivalism' and 'tsarist symbols'. Their strength though, is uncertain.

Political figures who do not use the terms and references of Novy Mir or of Solzhenitsyn, justify strong executive authority: and issues clearly go beyond political predilections and principles. In an interview with Pravda, Mikhail Bocharov, once a possible alternative to Ivan Silaev as Prime Minister of Russia, and latterly the head of Yeltsin's Supreme Economic Council, called for 'powerful, forceful executive authority such as does not exist in Russia... a ban on meetings of all Soviets from the Supreme Soviet to country soviets for one and a half years to two years'; he contended that the necessity of the time was 'an economic dictatorship...as exists in South Korea, Singapore and, to a limited extent, in Chile...'. Gavrill Popov considered that the elected Mayor of Moscow should be free of the trammels of the elected City Council: and there are indications that Anatoly Sobchak is inclined to similar views. In February, when Stanislav Shatalin gave an interview, he stated that President Yeltsin was inclined to be too mild in dealing with misuse of demonstrations, the free press and the liberty granted to those of various political views.

L he Tomsk vice-regent, Sulashkin, is of the opinion that 'opposition' is widespread in executive institutions: opposition which is equivalent to 'sabotage'. Hence he calls for stern measures from executive authorities in Moscow. Old Russian Communist Party members control key administrative positions in local soviets: a group of 31 in Ul'yanovsk, a group of 23 in Penza, a group of 22 in Kirov, of 11 in Chelyabinsk etcetera. In Siberia, according to Sulashkin, these functionaries are concerned with creating their own enclave: and this is what local demands for devolution amount to. A project for a Siberian Soviet Federated Republic he dismisses as prepared by '...former, still active leaders of the nomenklatura, and, in their imagination, this is only the first step on the road to the political sovereignty of Siberia.

The intentions are clear: '...tear Siberia from the RSFSR, remove it from the jurisdiction of President Yeltsin, prevent the implementation of reforms...'. Local authorities in the Urals, Siberia and the Far East argue they want powers normally given to autonomous republics to stop the 'rapacious exploitation of the region'. As a popular figure in Krasnoyarsk put it, what is at issue is not a flag or independence, but genuine issues of welfare. Sulashkin and other vice regents disagree. They state that citizens have a touching and ridiculous faith in the President's representatives: and they imply that democrats hostile to them. and devolutionists, are unrepresentative, naive or outright conspirato-

Stanislav Shatalin is also guarded about the current use of the conventions and practices of democracy. According to him, the imminent danger is not civil war among and within the Republics of the Commonwealth. Rather, in Russia there is the possibility of a coup: there '... is afoot a careful, all-round, well planned preparation for a counterrevolution...the preparation of an organized attack on democracy...'. President Yeltsin is not fulfilling his functions as guarantor of the constitution and civil rights. 'On every street corner, newspapers are sold that are as fatal as snake poison: they spread chauvinism, racism, and they call for the use of force and for the overthrow of constituted authority...We repeat slogans about the freedom of the press and freedom of speech like little children, without understanding the meaning... Without impunity, they spread propaganda the like of which carns a prison sentence in the most democratic countries of the world .... Shatalin calls for firm executive action against these 'venomous' opponents.

The march of the hungry organized by the Russian Communist Workers Party and 'Working Moscow' on 22 December and 12 January worries Shatalin. He confesses he fears the aims of the emerging communist leaders, General Makashov and Professor Alexei Sergeev, who clearly command respect in

trade unions of the Urals and in Moscow. Shatalin is disturbed by Sergeev's call for a state monopoly on foreign exchange, and foreign trade; for a halt to the export of raw materials and semi-manufactured and manufactured goods from the country; for control over the exchange marts where speculation has fuelled inflation. Each measure would involve the Federation in autarky: and could quite well herald a new version of the old 'command economy'.

But each problem is also clearly linked to Russia's current crisis, the program has a powerful appeal and Sergeev appears able to coordinate socialist and communist opposition to the government better than Nina Andreeva's 'Unity' group, Alksnis's 'Soiuz' fraction or Roy Medvedev's and Boris Kargalitsky's socialists. For Shatalin, Sergeev's course would be suicidal for the country: but it is popular, and this popularity raises questions concerning the powers of discretion of the public.

Shatalin's stand on Sergeev and on the threat elsewhere of fascism coincides with the sentiment expressed by others that social change within the former Soviet republics has led to shifts in public opinion which are potentially explosive. President Yeltsin's foreign policy advisor, Galina Starovoytova, pointed out in a recent issue of Literaturnaya Gazeta that the Russian government has to take into consideration the phenomenon of displaced Russians coming into the Federation: that these migrants have, in other states, been chauvinists. Russia's multi-party polity could take odd twists, it is implied, in such a situation.

Much of the 'liberal' and 'radical' opinion that is reflected in Shatalin's statements is coloured by responses to surveys of reactions to elections and to other crucial issues which appear to show widespread apathy and indifference to representative institutions. Tatiana Zaslavskaya's evaluations of voter response to the local and republican elections of 1990 concluded that there was little interest in the electoral process; and these surveys received considerable publicity in the 'radical' Moscow

News. Recently, a Moscow News survey has indicated that 80% of correspondents would not have supported perestroika had they known its ultimate cost. This clearly indicates a fickle character to Russia's public, which has, in turn, sparked off disappointment among liberals.

It is against this background that, in the January issue of Znamiya, the political scientist A. Migranyan has suggested a possible course for Russia's government, where strong leadership, populism and nationalism should run in tandem. Such a suggestion indicates how a leading commentator conceives the position of Presidency in Russia, and his justification of his views helps explain the conciliatory attitudes of parliamentarians to Boris Yeltsin.

Migranyan's views stress the centrality of Yeltsin in contemporary politics, and he is enthusiastic about this position. 'He is a charismatic leader, he has mass support, and the people simply believe in him.' Migranyan explains that this is not because the President is a democratically elected leader. For only a narrow group of Moscow intellectuals are concerned with democratic principles. He is not important because of 'rational judgements' or a programme. He is important because, '...for Russia and for the people, he is the man who expresses its interest...'

But Migranyan and his co-discussant in the issue, Alexander Tsypko, are also convinced that the democratic side of Yeltsin's programme, associated with privatization, will become steadily unpopular. They are certain, moreover, that the only alternative, i.e. communism, is psychologically unacceptable to most Russians at the moment. The basis of politics, consequently, will have to be promises and nationalism, according to them. And they contend that Boris Yeltsin is the single individual most capable of presenting this package to the public and make it acceptable.

But it will have to be an unusal form of nationalism that Yeltsin mobilizes. For it will be one part ethnic (russkii) nationalism, which

will appeal to Russians, who constitute over 70% of the Federation's population, and are a dominant group even in areas such as Bashkiria and Yakutia; and it will be one part 'traditional' pre-1917 all-Russian (rossilskii) nationalism, with an eye to the multi-ethnic nature of the Federation and the existence of large Russian minorities outside the country. Whatever the case, there will be more talk of the coat of arms of Moscow and the old name of Leningrad or Kalinin in the politics of the future: there will be less talk of devolution and self-government. except, as recently occurred, for the sake of public posture.

hese are almost inescapable conclusions in current circumstances. And the April Congress of Deputies is probably an instance of what is to come. When the rebel democrat and Speaker of the Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbulatov, threw in his lot with 'hardliners' to force concessions from Boris Yeltsin, harsh words were said concerning the overweening powers of the presidency and about presidential political culture. There was much sound and fury about democracy. But in interviews, Khasbulatov was outraged at the thought of the dissolution of parliament, which, he argued, would be disastrous for the country. And ultimately, he and other rebels backed down when faced with the possibility of a resignation of the Gaider cabi-

In circumstances of rampant, fear and mistrust, where democrats are constantly wary of a communist comeback, no other solution is possible to this and other similar crises. And if this trend continues, a sad situation may well arise where the country's standard bearers of perestroika acquiesce in a trend where Russians are likely to be read more homilies written by the bearded prophet of Vermont, Alexander Solzhenitsyn: and where they will be taught to shun the more wholesome if simple fare of civil rights and parliamentarism for which Andrei Sakharov spent the better part of his life fighting. All this while Boris Yeltsin smiles benevolently over this circus without much bread.

### Islam and Central Asia

. OLIVIER ROY

THE political forces in the new Muslim Republics of Central Asia (Uzbekistan, Kirgiziia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan) may be classified into six trends of considerably varying significance and consistency:

\*A powerful republican communist party, totally indigenous, clientelist and conservative, and rejecting the democratic opening up. But it does not shrink from playing the nationalist or indeed even the Islamic card. It is in fact a party of the Algerian Front de la Liberation Nationale (FLN) type and not in the least a communist party. These parties have in general changed their names but they remain in power.

\*A nationalist opposition with an ethnic base which wants independence and struggles for the supremacy of the dominant ethnic against other minorities. The Birlik in Uzbekistan is a good example.

\*'Russian' movements, that is, those who wish to maintain the Union. These are, for example, the Intersoyuz and they are at times sustained by the semi-clandestine networks supported by the army. These movements have lost all hope after the collapse of the putsch of 19 August 1991.

\*'Democratic' groups. These are very much in a minority, seek to build a state founded on law and to create a democratic space as against independence, which might be detrimental to minorities. These groups recruit their support from among the intelligentsia of non-indigenous or mixed origin.

\*An informal Islam. This is popular and fundamentalist, and comes out into the open under the leadership of mullahs who have emerged from a clandestine clergy and which have been sanctioned by the official clergy if they have not been liquidated, pure and simple. It marks the triumph of the parallel clergy over the official one. This Islam recruits in the country, in suburbs, and in peripheral regions of the

Republics (Ferghana in Uzbekistan, southern Tajikistan).

\*A political Islam, embodied in the Hezb-i Nehzat-i Islami, led by the intelligentsia.

Today, with independence and the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the two principal forces left are the old communist parties still in power. They in their turn champion the nationalist claims and tend to become single parties on the model that is common to the third world (like the Algerian FLN). We shall therefore examine essentially the weight of Islam.

Since 1989 a popular Islam under the aegis of parallel mullahs has reemerged in Central Asia, in Dagestan, and among the Tatars of the Volga. The importance of this Islamic activism depends on the region. As a general rule we could say that the weaker the national identity, the more fundamentalist the Islam. For example, in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, the nationalist movements are dominant. For them, Islam is merely one of the components of national identity. But if a national identity is feeble, as among a multi-ethnic population (North Caucasus, Fergana valley in Uzbekistan), a minority in relation to a 'Christian' population (Tatars of the Volga, Abkhasians of Georgia), or with the definition of national identity itself being problematic (Tajikistan), the fundamentalist movement is powerful.

The sermons which we have heard in the mosques are telling. They deal with the return to religious practice, to the Arabic alphabet, but equally to 'good conduct' while deploring the deleterious influence of Russian customs, especially of women. The mullahs demand religious teaching in schools, halaal meat, the official observance of Muslim holidays, and the shift from Sunday to Friday for the weekly holiday. They inveigh against traditions deemed non-Islamic, e.g. extravagant spending on celebrating the rites of passage, mixing among

<sup>\*</sup>Translated from the French by Madhavan K. Palat.

men and women, the consumption of alcohol, etcetera. They attempt to compensate for the lack of a state by resocializing around the mosque a population that has been destructured by the Soviet economic and institutional crisis. Under cover of a restoration of Islam, it is in fact a demand for the Islamisation of society. During the riots in Dushanbe in February 1990, which were the only ones without an ethnic dimension, the demonstrators had attacked women, Russian as well as Tajik, who were not adequately covered.

ho are the agents of Soviet Islam? On the one hand we find an 'official clergy', which is sanitized and restored, and which seeks to preserve its legitimacy by dealing directly with Islamic powers, e.g. Saudi Arabia and Iran. On the other hand, there is the parallel clergy, which has come out into the open. The histories of the two clergies have been written by Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay.

The official clergy, created by Stalin in 1941, rests on four 'muftiyya', or spiritual administrations, established in four geographic zones and which enjoy the monopoly of the management of the mosques and madrasas which are still open. After parallel Islam came out into the open in about 1989, this clergy finds it difficult to establish a new legitimacy. In Tashkent, the mufti Baba-

khanov was eased out in 1989 under pressure from below. This benefited Mamayusupov, the official mullah, educated in Libya and wholly arabophone. But then he, in his turn, fell victim to 'wahhabi' (that is, fundamentalist) mullahs coming from Ferghana. At the same time, the religious officials of Taiikistan (led by the 'Qazikalan' Akbar Turanjanzade) and of Kazakhstan (under Hassanbeg Radbeg) who depend on the muftiyya of Tashkent, want to become 'autocephalic'. The mufti of Europe and Siberia, Talghat Tajuddin (whose seat is at Ufa in the autonomous Republic of Bashkiria and therefore included in the Russian Federation) seems to enjoy a more solid position sustained by the active support of the World Islamic League (the Rabita). However, the imam of the mosque of Moscow hopes to become autonomous in relation to the mufti of Europe. The Shi'ite musti of Baku, the Shaikhul-Islam Pashazade, the former disciple of the conservative Iranian ayatollah, Shariat-Madari, is not threatened by a fundamentalist challenge.

It is in the North Caucasus, where the mufti of Marashkala, Dakaev, would have been driven out by the population, that the challenge of the official clergy is the strongest. In June 1991, riots had broken out against the excessively high charges for the pilgrimage to Mecca. The muftiyya would have splintered into

five entities corresponding to the administrative and political divisions (four autonomous republics and one autonomous region all within the Russian Republic). We cannot discern any tendency to the creation of a grand muftiyya of the USSR. On the contrary, official Islam is adapting itself to the political divisions of the USSR of today and thus shattering the straitjacket of the four muftiyyas established by Stalin.

fficial Islam, whose leadership has been changed, is no longer a transmission belt for the authorities and the KGB. A delicate correspondence has been established among these powers. Official Islam has secured, not the monopoly of religious practice, which is impossible, but of being treated as a partner by the authorities. It seeks to attain the maximum of Islamisation measures without intervening at the political level. It is taking care to gather unto itself and thereby to control, the parallel mullahs and thus to make them official. In the long term, the official clergy attempts to set up religious teaching of quality (by creating secondary madrasas and Islamic universities) in order to train up mullahs, and it hopes to control Islam from above through a fundamentalist but not political discourse. We may note, therefore, the contours of a fusion of official and parallel Islam under the legal control of the former but the militant pressure of the latter.



The Soviet Experience

The possibilities of open inquiry in the USSR during perestroika has confirmed the existence of a parallel fundamentalist clergy which has survived the repression and succeeded in maintaining and leading religious practice in very wide segments of the population, including among members of the Communist Party and the urban population. The importance of the Sufi brotherhoods seems real in the North Caucasus and negligible in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Everywhere, thousands of informal mullahs, who used to lead a semi-clandestine existence according to Alexandre Bennigsen's model, have emerged from the shadows and have opened mosques with the tacit assent of local authorities and of the official clergy. The movement is spectacular in Dushanbe. The Lenin kolkhoz, the most important in the district, has provided land for the construction of a 'kolkhoz mosque'. Enormous cathedral-like mosques of several thousand square metres, with domes and minarets, are rising from the ground like mushrooms. The tombs of the Suff masters have been restored by the people (like that of Yakub Charkhi). The money was supplied by Arab circles and through contributions by the faithful. The 'self-proclaimed' mullahs, whose legitimacy is recognized by the population, are most critical of the old official clergy.

But they have effected a compromise with the religious authorities installed since 1988 (the mufti of Tashkent and the 'Grand Qazi' of Dushanbe). Thus, the underground mullah, Abdullah Saidov, who hadbeen condemned after the riots in Kurgan Tepe in August 1986, carries out his ministry openly and has been a member of the Soviet delegation on the pilgrimage to Mecca after having spent two years in Siberian camps. In a recent interview, he supported the Algerian FIS and pleaded for an 'Islamic economy'. Foreign influence on Islamic fundamentalism on the other hand is very recent and superficial. It is a matter essentially of petro-dollars. The war in Afghanistan has played a role in the growth of awareness, but it does not seem to have been directly influenced by the Mujahideen. The term 'wahhabi' used by

the official press in order to designate the activists is a simple pejorative term for the 'fundamentalist' and does not point to any Saudi influence prior to 1989. It should be recalled that in the Indian sub-continent in the 19th century, the term signified every rigorous and fundamentalist movement.

he revival of Sufism is evident but in a form more popular and maraboutique than spiritual and institutional. Everywhere mausoleums are being restored like that of Maulana Yakub Charkhi, a naqshbandi, on the outskirts of Dushanbe, and frequented especially by women. If the Sufi doctrine and prayer at the tombs are not condemned by the fundamentalist mullahs, the same does not apply to maraboutique practices (e.g. the wish to have a child). In Central Asia proper, the sustenance of Islam during the black years does not seem particularly due to the Sufi brotherhoods as against the situation in the North Caucasus (though not, perhaps, in Turkmenistan).

The communist parties which have remained in power everywhere in the Muslim republics can no longer oppose Islam. The relations of power between them and official Islam have altered. Today, it is the local governments of the Muslim republies which need the official clergy in order to control as far as possible the parallel Islam. The strategy is as follows. The state does not interfere any longer in the creation of small local mosques, the 'panjvaghti', but subjects the setting up of the 'jama' or large mosques to the authority of the official clergy. In this case, the 'khatib' (the preacher) of the mosque is paid by the state, but the state does not exercise any more control over the teaching or the contents of the sermons. They leave it to the official clergy to respect the informal compromise established between the clergy and the state. The official clergy is no longer an appendix of the state; it is instead a partner. The relations are ambiguous since the clergy demands rigorous re-Islamisation but is also worried about the rise of a populist and political Islam embodied in the Party of Islamic Renais-

The Party of Islamic Renaissance (Nehzat) was created in Astrakhan in June 1990 on the initiative of Muslims of-the RSFSR (essentially of the Daghestanis and Tatars, including a converted Russian). Today it includes branches in all the Muslim republics. The strong points are Moscow, the Tatars of the Volga, Daghestan, Tajikistan, and, it appears, Abkhasia—that is to say, the Muslim peoples who don't have a secure place in the nationalist movements or who find themselves minorities in a disintegrating Union (Daghestan in relation to the Russians, and Tajiks in relation to the Turcophone). In effect, the great originality of the party is that it wants to be Soviet and rejects the national and ethnic divisions of Soviet Muslims. It publishes journals in the different languages of the USSR, e.g. the Hedayat in Persian and the Al Wahdat in Russian. The leader of the party in Tajikistan is a 'parallel' mullah, Emmat al Sama. His deputy, Osman Dada, is a jurist. The most famous parallel mullahs are sympathisers of the party and, no doubt, also members (Ghaffour, Abdullah Saidov).

The aim of the party is to 'unify Muslims of the Soviet territory'. The headquarters of the party is at Moscow. While the programme denounces national conflicts, its line is of the militant fundamentalist type. It insists on preaching and on conversion, especially of Slavs. It denounces the official clergy, demands Islamic schools, and wants an Islamic social justice founded on the zakat and sadaqat. The reformers are traditional Sunni, and the party supports the Algerian Fis.

The Party of Islamic Renaissance has been denounced by the official clergy (the four muftiyya have condemned it) and by the authorities of the Muslim republics. The Congresses of the party have been forbidden in 1991 in Tashkent and in Dushanbe. Laws have been enacted to prohibit all political activity in the name of Islamic Renaissance is more acceptable in Moscow than in Central Asia. But its influence grows.

## Central Asian resurgence

K. WARIKOO

RECENT and continuing developments in the former Soviet Union have once again brought Central Asia into the sharp focus of international politics. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the subsequent emergence of newly independent and sovereign Central Asian states of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrghyzstan and Kazakhstan, besides the Caucasian state of Azerbaijan-all having predominantly Muslim populationshas drastically changed the balance of power in this region. Whereas the Central Asian states have earnestly begun to rediscover their roots and shape their political destiny on quite a new basis, Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are making frantic efforts to fill the vacuum by playing up the Islamic card. Turkey on the other hand is strengthening its linkages with these states on the basis of common historical, cultural and ethnic ties. Due to its geographical proximity to Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and India, Central Asia is going to play an important role in the geopolitics of this region.

With the collapse of the Soviet system and the wave of ethno-religious and nationalist resurgence sweeping this region, the situation in Central Asia has become politically volatile and socially fragile. The ethnic problem in Central Asia is compounded by the ethnographic complexity of the region. Whereas Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmens and Kyrghyzs form a definite majority in their respective states, there is a substantial presence of Slavic and

other ethnic minority groups scattered in various Central Asian states. In Kazakhstan, Kazakhs who constituted only 36% of the total population in 1979 are now in a majority sharing 39.7% (1989 census count), the Russians sliding to second position with only 37.8%.

The Russians are also scattered in Kyrghyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan at the ratio of 25%, 10%, 8% and 9% respectively. There are about 12 lakh Uzbeks in Tajikistan alone, thereby constituting about 24% of its population. The ethnic jigsaw in Central Asia is further complicated by the trans-border settlement of Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmens and Kazakhs. who have been living on both sides of Central Asian borders with Iran, Afghanistan and China. There are five million Tajiks, three million Uzbeks and two million Turkmens living in Afghanistan. Besides, seven lakh Kazakhs and one lakh Kyrghyzs are scattered in the adjoining Xinjiang region of China. Five lakh Turkmens live in Iran. Any crossborder fraternization of this Central Asian population on ethnic and religious lines is bound to result in political instability in the entire region.

For the last few years there has been widespread ethno-religious resurgence in Central Asia. The people, taking advantage of Gorbachev's policies of perestroika and glasnost began to assert their ethnic and religious identity and openly air their hitherto suppressed feelings. Informal activist groups were established seeking restoration of

their cultural, religious and political rights. One of the most popular fronts, Birlik (Unity), was started in Tashkent in November 1988 by a group of Uzbek intellectuals as a movement to preserve Uzbekistan's natural, material and spiritual riches. Birlik launched a virulent attack on the Soviet policy of cotton monoculture in Central Asia. It also led a successful campaign for declaring Uzbek the state language of Uzbekistan.

Similarly, one of the political and social activist groups set up in Kazakhstan, the Adilet (Justice), seeks to preserve the memory of the victims of Stalinist repression who perished in Kazakhstan. Another society, Atmaken, is striving to promote Kazakh language and culture. The establishment of these groups and their activities contributed to an unprecedented ethnic upsurge throughout Central Asia. Local writers, artists and academics have been idealizing the past through their works of history, art and culture. Old places, squares and streets are being renamed on an ethnic or old Islamic pattern. December 17 has been declared as the Day of Democratic Renewal in Kazakhstan.

Recently a mass rally was held at Alma Ata in memory of anti-Russian disturbances of December 1986. Nazarbayev, who also addressed the rally, later issued a decree exonerating and rehabilitating all those implicated in these disturbances in the Soviet period. Similarly Uzbek corruption trial convicts who were sentenced by the Supreme Court have been freed and even rehabilitated. Local languages have now been declared as the state language in respective Central Asian states. Tajikistan has adopted the Persian-Arabic script for Tajik, thereby discarding the 70-year old practice of Cyrillic script. Iran is going to supply the requisite text-books and literature to Tajikistan. It remains to be seen if other Central Asian states also choose to replace the existing script with a Persian-Arabic script as demanded by the Muslim political and religious activists or opt for a Roman one as is the practice in Turkey.

In the post-Soviet era there has been a spurt in anti-Russian senti-

ments. The exodus of Russian speaking populations which had started a few years back, particularly after the violent inter-ethnic clashes in Central Asia, has gained momentum. A number of social and political groups that are now functioning in Central Asia have been demanding reservation of jobs for indigenous ethnic groups. A land law was adopted in Kyrghyzstan in April 1991 which ruled that 'land in the Republic of Kyrghyzstan is the property of the Kyrghyz people'.

A his new land law created dissatisfaction among the non-Kyrghyz ethnic minorities, which make up half the population of Kyrghyzstan. So much so the Christian Democratic and Slavonic unions and the Cossack national groups of Kyrghyzstan united to form an association with headquarters at Bishkek, the Kyrghyz capital. This association is striving to defend social and political rights of Slavic and other ethnic minorities in Kyrghyzstan. In Kazakhstan, Cossacks have organized themselves under the banner of Vozrozhdeniye (Revival) and other societies demanding separation of the Cossack-dominated territory of Kazakhstan and its merger with Russia. In September 1991 a large rally of Cossacks was held in Uralsk town to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Urals Cossacks' service to the Russian state. The Kazakhs reacted sharply to this, and held counter rallies under the banner of Azat, Zheltoskan and Nevada Semipalatinsk Movements against the Cossack meeting.

In fact the Kazakh President, Nazarbayev sent a strongly worded letter to Yeltsin, the President of Russia, describing these celebrations as provocative. Nazarbayev protested that the Cossack celebrations 'held under the Russian flag on the territory of Kazakhstan were seen by its people and local movements as a political act demonstrating open disrespect for the state sovereignty of Kazakhstan'. All these circumstances suggest that there is enough potential for inter-ethnic discord in all the Central Asian states, particularly between the indigenous ethnic groups and the Slavic minorities.

Notwithstanding their intra-ethnic diversities, the Muslims of Central

Asia have been sharing common religious and political destiny which acts as a strong homogenizing influence. Throughout its past history, Central Asia has played a key role in the dissemination of Islamic civilization in Asia, particularly the Indian subcontinent. Central Asia has never remained isolated from the Islamic stream. During the past 70 years, the Muslims of Central Asia adjusted with the Soviet linguistic, cultural and religious policies without diluting or changing their religious allegiance. Young Muslims would join the Communist Party and yet remain firm believers and practise their religion privately. At the popular grassroots level there has been a more strict observance of Islamic rites and rituals, including fasting during the month of Ramzan, performance of daily prayers and large attendance at mosques during the holy festivals.

Kestoration work of old and neglected mausoleums and tombs has been proceeding quite speedily. Huge donations are voluntarily collected to be used for the construction of mosques and medresseh. Fifty million copies of the Koran are reported to have been printed and distributed in 1989 alone. This is over and above the one million copies gifted by Saudi Arabia to the Central Asian Muslim Board. Saudi Arabia has also been pumping large sums of money into Central Asia in a bid to reorient the Central Asian society and politics on the puritan West Asian model of Islam. Last year a record number of Muslims from Central Asia performed their Haj pilgrimage despite the shortage of hard currency and high travel expenses. A number of religious and socio-political organizations are engaged in setting up new medresseh, publishing and circulating religious literature and also to establish direct links with co-religionists abroad.

The Islamic resurgence in the former Soviet Central Asia is also due to the spillover effects of the Khomeini revolution in Iran and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Several reports have appeared in the local press about the religious propaganda launched by Iran in this

region. Radio cassettes in Turkmen, Azeri, Persian and even Russian languages are reported to have been used in Central Asia as an effective means of arousing religious sentiments. Iranian radio stations of Gorgan and Bandar e-Turkmen have been beaming religious broadcasts to the Muslims of Turkmenistan for the past few years now. These broadcasts served as a source of information for the Muslim clergy and other radical Islamic organizations. From August 1986, Iranian television introduced regular telecasts in Turkmen and Azeri languages.

Iran's ideological influence has even spread to Tajikistan, which shares its languages and culture with that country. Iran has launched a big diplomatic initiative to strengthen its cultural, political and economic linkages with the newly independent Central Asian states. In as early as June 1991 Iran concluded an agreement with Azerbaijan to set up and activate a ground satellite station in the premises of Baku's Radio and Television company to enable the latter to receive the Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran. On the basis of this agreement, joint radio and television programmes in Persian and Azeri languages will be produced and there will be frequent exchanges of information, news and cultural groups.

Apart from these moves to extend Iran's ideological influence to Central Asia, steps are being taken to connect this land-locked region to Iran by direct rail and road links. Whereas Iran is going to build a 200 kms. long rail track from Mashad to Sarakhs, Turkmenistan is laying the rail line for an equal distance from Sarakhs to Tajan. Once completed, this will link the railway lines of Iran to the rail networks in all the Central Asian states.

If Iran has exerted considerable influence over Tajiks, that of the Afghan mujahideen has been even greater. There have been reports about the involvement of the Afghan mujahideen in propagating the militant ideology of Islam in Tajikistan. Wahabism has especially taken roots in rural areas particularly along the Tajik-Afghan border. Islamic revolutionary literature in the form of

pamphlets, books, religious appeals, works of Maududi (the founder of Jamat-i-Islami), Jamal-ud-Din Afghani and other Muslim revolutionaries has been circulated widely in Tajikistan.

The Wahabi literature that has been smuggled via Afghanistan, lavs emphasis on religious absolutism and is opposed to Sufism and holy shrines which represent the traditional and tolerant trend in Islam. Tajikistan's Wahabi leader, Abdullo Saidov, has been demanding the establishment of an Islamic state. The cross-border smuggling of religious and political literature by Afghan mujahideen and their agents into Central Asia has been facilitated by the common ethnic and religious background of the people inhabiting the Tajik and Afghan border areas. The growing influence of radical political-religious trends like Khomeinism and Wahabism will be one of the key factors in determining the future set-up of Central Asian society and polity.

he process of building a new national identity in Central Asia has begun. The ruling elite which owed allegiance to the Communist Party has switched sides and formed new political platforms thereby riding the crest of the nationalist wave. The communist parties have been disbanded. The Uzbek Communist Party has been renamed as the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan. Birlik (Unity) which was started in 1989 by a group of Uzbek intellectuals has become the main opposition party in Uzbekistan. While Birlik stands for democracy and nationalism, it is not against the Islamic political parties. Lately another democratic party Erk (Freedom) has been established by Uzbek intellectuals, scientists, students and workers. Headed by a prominent Uzbek poet, Erk strives for national revival in Uzbekistan.

Tajikistan is fast slipping into the hands of Islamic fundamentalists notwithstanding the election of Nabiyev, a former communist, as its President in the November 1991 elections. For the past few weeks Islamic activists have been holding demonstrations in the Tajik capital

demanding the establishment of an Islamic state in Tajikistan. Various political parties like Hizbe-e-Democrati-Tajikistan (Democratic Party of Tajikistan), Rastakhez-e-Milli (National Revival) and Hizbe-i-Ahaya-i-Islami (Islamic Movement Party) have been in the forefront of this movement.

In Kyrghyzstan the President Akayev has succeeded in enlisting popular support for his democratic reforms. Yet Akayev chose to take the oath of his office on the Koran soon after his election as President. Erkin Kyrghyzstan, another democratic party, holds extreme nationalist views and has been demanding 65% reservation of land, property and services exclusively for Kyrghyzs. In Kazakhstan, President Nazarbayev polled 98.4% votes in the recent elections. The Kazakh Communist Party has been renamed as the Socialist Party of Kazakhstan. Besides, several political activist groups such as the Democratic Union, Alma Ata Popular Front, Zheltoksan (December) and Azat (Nationalist) parties are actively spearheading the campaign for national revival in Kazakhstan. In short, an intense power struggle is going on between the former communists, democrats and nationalists on the one hand and the fundamentalist forces led by the Muslim clergy and Islamic political parties on the other.

Almost all the Central Asian states are working to establish their own National Guard, which could be a prelude to the formation of separate armies. That Kazakhstan is a nuclear power and several other Central Asian states produce uranium, lends a new dimension to the question of regional security and nuclear proliferation. Kazakhstan is estimated to possess 1410 nuclear warheads, 104 ICBMs and 40 nuclear bombers based on its territory. The Baikonour cosmodromo is also located in Kazakhstan. The Central Asian states are reported to have been producing about one half of the uranium ore in the former Soviet Union.

Continuing reports about the alleged sale of uranium and nuclear/military technology against hard currency to certain Islamic countries

and emigration of nuclear scientists and technicians have been a cause for concern. Such reports, which appeared both in Russian and Western media, were denied by the Kazakh and Tajik governments. Notwithstanding their denials, the possibility of Central Asian states being a potential source of nuclear proliferation remains. Western countries have sent high-profile diplomats and statesmen, including Margaret Thatcher, James Baker, Douglas Hurd and others to Kazakhstan to have discussions with Nazarbayev over various issues and particularly on the future of nuclear arms. The Austrian Chancellor and the French Defence Minister even visited the Baikonour cosmodrome. Nazarbayev has been hesitating to make any commitment on the elimination of all the nuclear weapons and missiles in Kazakhstan. As the Central Asian states begin to assert their regional position, their nuclear potential is likely to become a crucial aspect in regional security. The issues of NPT and nuclear disarmament in South Asia and elsewhere are directly linked with the issues of nuclear weapons in Central Asia.

ith the breaking down of previous economic ties with Moscow and disruption in the economic system in the new Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Central Asian states are busy evolving ways and means of creating a common Central Asian market and also to find external markets for its rich oil, gas, mineral and other resources. They have decided to fix the prices of cotton at a uniform rate after mutual agreement. They have also created their own gold reserves from the gold extracted from their territory. In order to get remunerative prices and to create an appropriate industrial infrastructure for processing the mineral and agricultural resources locally, all the Central Asian states have intensified the process of privatization of their economy and its opening to foreign investment. Prices of agricultural produce and natural resources have been revised upwards by all these states to ensure higher returns for their exports.

Turkmenistan's refusal to supply gas to Ukraine due to the dispute

on price, has caused serious tension in the relations between the two republics of the former Soviet Union. It remains to be seen if Turkmenistan decides to divert all its gas supplies to Iran which has offered world prices, thereby affecting the economy of Ukraine. Kazakhstan has maintained a lead in attracting foreign investment to modernize its economy and industry. An agreement has been signed with the English firm British Gas, which will extract oil in northern Kazakhstan providing a credit of 100 million dollars. The Italian company, ENI, French Elf Aquitaine and the English firms, British Petroleum and British Gas have evinced interest in the development of Karachigansh oil and gas flelds. Several other agreements for setting up telecommunication facilities and some industries have also been signed with other foreign countries. Turkmenistan has entered into an agreement with the Italian firm Technipetrol (TPL) for setting up a combine to produce cotton fabrics in Ashkhabad and also a complex for the production of polyethylene from local natural gas reserves. Similarly, Iran and Pakistan are striving to link the land-locked Central Asian states with the sea.

L'ailure of the CIS to create a common economic space has only expedited the process of regional realignment in Asia. The Central Asian states have formally joined'the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) at its meeting in Teheran held in February 1992, thereby embracing the regional grouping of Pakistan, Iran and Turkey. At the same time, moves are afoot to reorient the Central Asian economy in a manner that the Central Asian states are least dependent on the Slavic states. The formation of a Regional Council of Central Asia and Kazakhstan to develop close economic, scientific and cultural cooperation between these states is a step towards the formation of a Central Asian Federation. Concomitant with this new order in Central Asia is a marked resurgence of ethnicity, nationalism and an associated revival of Islam. Together, they are likely to determine the future of Central Asia.

### The peculiar Baltic case

MADHAVAN K. PALAT

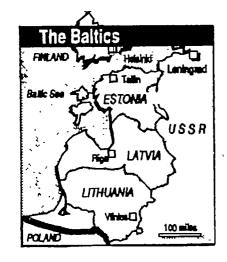
THE Baltic was not merely unique in the USSR like any other region, it was exceptional. It entered the USSR a quarter of a century after the other parts had; it was more developed than the rest, even Russia; and it was the most determined to leave the sinking ship when perestroika cracked the hull while the others were frantically occupied with the bilge of Union and Commonwealth treaties. Its membership of the USSR had never been recognized by the USA; and its dissident nationalist movements were perhaps deeper, wider, and better organized than in any country other than Russia it-

This exceptional condition has been customarily ascribed, much too loosely, to the Baltic being in some sense more 'European' than Russia and the rest, to its belonging to central and north Europe from which it was 'artificially' ripped by Russia. Apparently then, the Baltic is merely fulfilling its historical destiny after some interruption.

This interruption, as it happens, consists of at least 218 years from 1710 to 1918, when Estonia and Latvia were part of the Russian empire, of 123 years from 1795 to 1918 when Lithuania was, and then another 52 years from 1939 to 1991 when the lot together were in the USSR. By this logic of course the Ukraine, Belarus, all of the Caucasus, all of Kazakhstan and Central Asia also belong elsewhere, for they came in roughly during the 18th century, the Ukraine a trifle earlier and many much later. By the historical argument of 'artificial' attachment and true 'belonging', the Baltic is not in the least special. But it is exceptional in other respects which might explain much.

The most important difference lies in the decisive defeat of the Revolution of 1917 in the Baltic and its resounding success in Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. With that, the Baltic partook of an East European political development. Thereafter, in 1939-44, it was annexed to the Soviet Union; but it did not become just another part of the Union. The power of the Communist Party derived from a military triumph in the Second World War, not from the victory of its cadres in a social revolution. In this most important sense, the Soviet regimes in the Baltic were akin to the communist ones in East Europe, all engendered by the sinful liasons of military victors in the War. The difference between the Baltic and East Europe in this respect was not substantial. The Baltic Soviet regimes were the result of international agreements with both the Third Reich in 1939 and the Allies thereafter (and very nearly even with the Allies in 1939 itself). The East European regimes were the product of agreements with the Allies alone. Unlike the other Soviet regimes, the Baltic ones had not won their spurs in the Revolution: they were consequently feeble cripples, and were the first to face the charity of perestroika.

It is worth comparing the legitimacy of the three regimes: the precommunist bourgeois ones of the Baltic, the Bolshevik in the Soviet Union, and the post-war Soviet species in the Baltic. The most fertile source of Bolshevik legitimacy in Russia was its endorsement of the agrarian revolution of 1917-21. On that secure foundation, a new communist party then carried out the Stalinist industrialization, in part through a collectivization that destroyed the very peasantry that had triumphed in the agrarian revolution. The Communist Party in Russia scored a double victory, first by overthrowing a bourgeois regime by allying with a bourgeois or



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rather, petty-bourgeois peasantry, and then by exterminating that petty bourgeois ally. In the non-Russian areas of the Empire, the Bolsheviks consolidated themselves by underwriting those nationalists who were ready to ally with them against those who wished to go it alone or ally with anti-Bolsheviks and foreigners. Not unexpectedly, the pro-Bolshevik nationalists tended to be socially more radical than the others. The Soviet regime was thus based on this solid foundation of both nationalism and socialism.

Ironically enough, the bourgeois regimes that defeated the Bolsheviks could boast of an equally revolutionary achievement. This was due to the class and national composition of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Estonia and Latvia had a German landed aristocracy, a German and Russian bourgeoisie and bureaucracy, but respectively Estonian and Latvian peasantries. The nationalist non-socialist movements carried out a nationalist and social revolution by expropriating their German landlords: this was comparable to the Russian agrarian revolution against Russian landlords. The radical passions of a bourgeois nationalism in Latvia and Estonia and of a socialist Bolshevism in Russia equally seduced the petty bourgeois peasantries everywhere. Consequently, the Bolsheviks could not outbid the Baltic nationalists for the support of the peasantries.

he statistics are revealing. In 1918, 58% of Estonian land was in large estates, and two-thirds of the rural population was landless. Accordingly, 96.6% of the estates were expropriated, with farms and villas, over a period of two years from 1919 to 1921; and they were mainly German. In 1926 a compensation of 3% of the real value of these estates was granted, but nothing at all for the forests. In Latvia, the Constituent Assembly voted in 1920 for expropriating estates of more than 50 hectares; and in 1924 all pleas for compensation were dismissed. Once again, the losers were German. Bourgeois nationalists thus declared socialist results at the expense of the German aristocracy. It thereby yielded ideological respectability, revolutionary social change, and social cohesion, a magical triple combination that had fatally eluded, the text-books tell us, the Italian Risorgimento, the German unification, and even British social evolution according to the Marxist debates of the 1970s. Thereafter, a small-holding farming class turned to intensive agriculture, livestock breeding, and dairying, in Scandinavian style and with great success.

**B**ut this victory over the Bolsheviks was hard won and with the decisive support of the Germans and Allies, unholy as that combination might appear. In Estonia, the Bolsheviks were well-entrenched in towns, especially in the capital Tallinn and the heavily Russian Narva. They were particularly concentrated among the workers of the munitions industries and among soldiers and sailors. In local council elections in September 1917, that is, before the Revolution, they won 35% of the vote, with as high as 47% in Narva. In Latvia, the support was more widespread, not in pockets. Between May and August 1917, the town councils were Bolshevized on the basis of workers' and soldiers' support and they attempted to join hands with landless peasants' councils to form a single instrument of the revolutionary left.

The trend continued in September. During the Revolution itself Latvian troops played a crucial role in its defence and Baltic soldiers and sailors were the first to recognize the Russian Revolution. The elections to the Constituent Assembly for the former Russian Empire then turned in surprising results. The Bolsheviks were returned with 72% of the popular vote in Livonian or northern Latvia against a mere 45% in Petrograd, their citadel, and 24% in all of Russia. In the separate Estonian Constituent Assembly elections of February 1918, the Bolsheviks were all set for about 25-30% of the vote before they dissolved the elections itself. Thus, strangely, the Bolsheviks enjoyed perhaps greater support in Estonia and Latvia than in Russia itself; but they were confined to towns: and the countryside went overwhelmingly to the bourgeois nationalist parties. This was the balance that was then tipped by the German and Allied intervention against the Bolsheviks.

In March 1918, the Germans forced the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on Russia who had to renounce the southern half of Latvia; in August the northern portion of Latvia and all of Estonia were likewise abandoned. The German collapse in November 1918 then brought the Bolsheviks back to power in Latvia and Estonia where Soviet republics were proclaimed. But they had not reckoned with what might be a wholly unnatural Anglo-German collaboration at this moment of German defeat. German forces, the Royal Navy and Finnish contingents joined hands with an Estonian national army assembled under the exceptionally able Lt. Col. Johann Laidoner of the Tsarist army to defeat Red forces; and they were able to celebrate Estonian independence on 24 February 1919.

he Latvian struggle was more bitter because of greater Latvian, especially military, support for the Bolsheviks. The Allies, in particular the British, used or licensed German units under Major-General Count Rudiger von der Goltz, whose overheated imagination dreamt of restoring a bourgeois government in Petrograd to beat off the Allies. These units combined with a British naval squadron, the Latvian Balodoi Brigade, and a counter-revolutionary Russian force under Prince Lieven to overthrow the Bolsheviks in Riga in May 1918. This passed into nationalist legend as the 'Miracle on the Daugava'. Immediately thereafter, the Foreign Ministers' Council in Paris ordered the withdrawal of the Germans who now had to brace themselves for their humiliation at Versailles.

The Germans were replaced by two British officers, Sir Hubert Gough for the Estonians and Alexander (later of Tunis, of Second World War fame) for the Latvians. Fighting continued until November 1919, and peace was concluded in February 1920. The Russian Federation recognized both countries on the express condition that no foreign forces would be stationed there. For the moment it satisfied everybody. The two bourgeois governments then proceeded with their agrarian

revolutions against the Germans, after which there was no further role for the Bolsheviks. The presence of a foreign landowning class and the nature of the German and Allied intervention tipped the scales against the Bolsheviks; and it provided an unshakeable legitimacy to the bourgeois political systems there despite the excellent showing of the Bolsheviks.

he Lithuanian situation was comparable, if with important local variations. Here the large estates were by and large in Polish hands, the lesser ones in Russian, and little in German control. Therefore, the initial land reform, rather less radical than in Estonia and Latvia, proposed to expropriate estates of more than 80 hectares, which hit the Poles directly, but not the Russians so much. But the Christian Democrats were well-established in Lithuania; such radicalism smacked of Bolshevism to them; and, at their instance, the higher ceiling of 150 hectares was fixed along with a small compensation. Thereafter, the traditional village communes were broken up in favour of individual farming, and the Lithuanian agrarian social structure came to resemble the Latvian and Estonian. Again, a radical agrarian land reform had been carried out without the Bolsheviks.

Unlike in Estonia and Latvia, the Bolsheviks were genuinely weak in Lithuania. The country was wholly agrarian, without the pockets of industrialization that created Bolshevik nuclei in the other two countries. Consequently, there was no network of workers' and soldiers' Soviets or councils as in farther north. Most of all, Lithuania had been under German occupation for fully three years. It had therefore been integrated into the German war economy, especially in food and timber supplies and the deployment of agricultural labour. The judicial, administrative, and educational systems had also been reorganized along German lines. Thus a significant basis for the separation from Russia had already been laid.

Owing to the German occupation, the Russian Revolution of 1917 made no difference in Lithuania. Therefore, the Bolshevik action could begin only after the German defeat at the end of 1918. Even so, the Bolsheviks had to rely on pure armed force, without local support at all. Not surprisingly, a rag-tag Lithuanian army routed the Bolsheviks in the late summer of 1919, and peace was eventually signed in July 1920. The Bolsheviks enjoyed even less legitimacy here, and the nationalists even more, than in the other two Baltic countries. We have been told so often that backwardness made for Bolshevik success: yet, in the Baltic, it was, at least in part the reverse. Lithuanian backwardness left no opportunity for Bolshevism, while the greater industrial development in Latvia and Estonia led to near success there.

Thereafter, the three Baltic countries went through a European pattern of political development, so different from the Soviet experience. After less than a decade of parliamentary democracy marked by anticommunist hysteria, they settled for crypto-fascist or conservative dictatorships from the late 1980s until the war. This corresponds overwhelmingly to European trends, of which Nazi Germany was the most extreme, Franco's Spain was the most enduring, and the north-west European monarchies along with France the exceptions.

Thus in 1926, the Lithuanian Nationalist Party, the Tautininkai, along with rightist army plotters, overthrew the government. A minority government biefly ruled with the support of the Christian Democrats; but President Smetona dissolved parliament in 1927 and ruled thereafter in properly authoritarian fashion until 1940. In Latvia, the campaigns against parliament and the left began in 1926. A series of fascist groups like the Fire Cross (Ugunkrusts) emerged, were proscribed, and re-appeared in 1933 as the Thunder Cross (Perkonkrusts) with grey shirts, black berets, the Nazi salute, and xenophobic nationalist and anti-semitic ideologies. K. Ulmanis, the hero of the liberation war, then formed his government in 1934, declared an emergency under the pretext of a communist plot just as Hitler himself did, suspended parliament, and ruled by decree until 1940.

Again, like Hitler or Franco, he proscribed his truly fascist supporters, this time the Thunder Cross, without thereby furthering the cause of the left or of democracy.

In Estonia, fascist bodies began forming in 1926 and condensed as the Estonian Freedom Fighters in 1929 under Major-General Andres Laska. A series of referenda were held in 1932-33 on whether or not to augment the powers of the executive. After a violent campaign by the Freedom Fighters in 1933, the cause won a huge majority. An authoritarian constitution for a presidential system was then drawn up, and the Freedom Fighters conducted another exceptionally violent campaign for the election of a president in 1934. To fight off this fascist menace, Konstantin Pats, the Prime Minister and another hero from the revolutionary years, appointed General Laidoner as Commander-in-Chief with special powers, disbanded both the Freedom Fighters and parliament, and ruled by decree.

L hus both Estonia and Latvia established regimes remarkably similar to that of Franco in Spain, with a military base, authoritarian rule, and even the repression of the destabilizing fascist movements, be it the Falange in Spain, the Thunder Cross is Latvia or the Freedom Fighters in Estonia. In this last respect they resembled Hitler for his liquidation of his own original Nazi base, the Storm Troops under Ernst Rohm. But Hitler differed by creating instead the new military formation, the ss, and not relying on the army alone as the others did. In these different ways then, while the Soviet Union was going through the horrors of five-year plans, collectivization, and Stalinist purges, the Baltic went through the entirely different political and social experiences of crypto-fascist rule a la Spain and Portugal, yet industrializing withal, like Russia. Two divergent routes to industrialization and modernization then met unexpectedly at the post-war junction.

The communists could not therefore compete with the nationalists by showing either the heroic expulsion of the foreigner in a revolution or a Stakhanovite modernization. It was such a weakly legitimate communist regime that replaced the Nationalists at the end of the War. Even so, they could not flaunt the halo of liberation. The communists were tainted with having occupied the country as part of a deal with Hitler and not really as liberators. Through agreements with Germany in August and September 1939, the whole of the Baltic was consigned to the Soviet sphere of influence and, by the summer of 1940, Soviet armies were in place. Thereafter, the armies and communists were expelled by the Germans; the armies then returned as genuine liberators, but the com-munists as inglorious jackals. It was a heavy cross to bear.

But it is worth noting the infinite contradictions in this situation. By the nationalist argument, the villains of the piece are the Soviet (Russian) and Nazi (German) interests. Yet all the others were equally implicated. Thus the British and the French were negotiating with Stalin in 1939 to sign away the security of the Baltic to the Soviet Union; but Stalin chose Hitler as the more reliable! They had already signed away Austria and Czechoslovakia to the Nazis. Now, in 1940, when Soviet armies occupied the Baltic, the British had been the most anxious that they should do so in order to open up the eastern front; and Sir Stafford Cripps, the British Ambassador, was constantly egging on Molotov, the Foreign Minister, to do the job.

In addition, Lithuania gained territorially, by acquiring Vilnius from Poland and Klaipeda from Germany. But the British and French, however perfidious their conduct, did not rule these territories they had so betrayed; from a position of irresponsibility, they could comfortably champion the independence of these countries throughout the propaganda of the cold war. With all the paradox and irony typical of such situations, Lithuanian communists had to suffer the odium of having mortgaged national liberties without being given any credit for having purchased the historic national territory of Vilnius. The Communist Party was in power: it therefore had to bear the stigma of defeat in 1918-19 and of a treacherous victory in 1939-44. It therefore enjoyed only

the advantage of incumbency: and it had to demonstrate that it had achieved more than the bourgeois regimes could have managed; and further, in a distinctly nationalist fashion, that they had protected and promoted local interests against or despite the Kremlin.

L his was especially possible in Lithuania, which perhaps explains the surprising popularity of the communists in this most secessionist state. Thus Antanas Snieckus, the First Secretary, who held the Communist Party of Lithuania as his fiefdom during his long reign from 1940 to 1974, was a notable defender of Lithuanian 'national' interests. He started as a fanatical communist during the 1940s, but, from about 1950, began his 'republican orientation'. He was a personal friend of Mikhail Suslov, the Kremlin ideologist, maintained close contacts in Moscow, knew Kremlin politics extremely well, and he protected his machine from purges. He effortlessly controlled appointments and sabotaged orders from Moscow, especially on questions of excessive production targets (e.g. on expansion of cereal at the expense of pasture). He secured privileges for Lithuanians to emigrate, ensured peasants' rights to control one hectare of land for personal use, managed the right kind of industrial development without an environmental degradation: finally, Lithuania seemed a model combination of modernity and tradition. For these reasons Snieckus was not in high favour in Moscow, but they preferred to express their displeasure only at his funeral by sending a low-level delegation.

Snieckus was particularly successful in the sensitive area of ethnic balance. Between 1959 and 1970, Lithuanians, as a percentage of the Republic, increased from 79.3% to 80.1%. This was due in part to certain natural factors like a higher birth rate for Lithuanians than for others. But it combined with three policy successes. The first was the assimilation of Poles, then the children of mixed marriages opting for Lithuanian nationality, and most of all, low immigration, unlike in Latvia and Estonia. The low immigration despite the high living standards was due to a deliberately slower pace of industrialization and the optimal use of republican resources such that there was no influx of labour. In addition, all the cultural institutions were well-preserved, especially of Lithuanian schooling, and Lithuanians advanced into higher and more positions of leadership in the party, the intelligentsia, and in production.

Whether owing to such supple management or to deliberate policy in the Kremlin, Lithuania, along with the rest of the Baltic, enjoyed a longer period of liberalization after Stalin's death and Khrushchev's secret speech of 1956. The latter's persecution of nationalist 'deviations' in 1958-61, in which Latvia suffered, was softened in Lithuania thanks to Snieckus; and purged officials reappeared in other positions within a decade, which suggests clever manipulation. As a result, rather unexpectedly, in 1988 the Communist Party of Lithuania became a species of nationalist party under Algirdas Brazauskas with his considerable popularity founded on his advertized independence of Moscow and his previous history of conflict with obsequious first secretaries. This combined with the purely nationalist non-communist position of Vytautas Landsbergis and the Sajudis movement for independence. The communists in Lithuania could hope to legitimize themselves only by incumbency and 'protecting' the country from Moscow: in other words, through nationalism.

Dut all this applies only to the communists, which does not mean all of political life in Lithuania. A major segment of Lithuanian society, the Roman Catholic Church, resolutely rejected both communism and the USSR. The two were not the same in principle; but the necessary doctrinal rejection of communism could here become the nationalist repudiation of the USSR. The Roman Catholic Church had traditionally been one of the main vehicles of Lithuanian nationalism from as early as the 1860s. It was then directed against Polish cultural hegemony and the Polish monopoly of office in the Church hierarchy; thereafter it had to battle against the Russian Orthodox Church and

cultural russification. After the Soviet annexation, it had to defend itself against the atheistic religion of Marxism-Leninism, which functioned in the same evangelical fashion as orthodoxy had done formerly.

Thus catholicism became not merely an ideological opponent of communism as elsewhere in Europe, but a specifically nationalist separatism. Because of the nature of its opposition to the political dictatorship of the Communist Party, the Church became, rather unexpectedly, one of the most organized movements for civil rights. A third of those arrested as dissidents were priests; and dissidence in the Brezhnev years was even defined ideologically in religious more than nationalist terms.

Once again then, contrary to a well-established European tradition, the Roman Catholic Church here became a liberal constitutional force. The Church absorbed to itself, in a potent combination, the faith of the ancestors, the modern identity of the nation, and the natural rights of the citizen. Small wonder then that even Soviet sources put the percentage of believers at 75% of the population in 1969. Such a combined role for both the Communist Party (in both its handicapped and positive aspects) and of the Roman Catholic Church was perhaps unique in the Soviet Union and contributed to the special intensity of separatism here.

L he Estonian and Latvian situations differed by not having a Church of such prominence and nationalist leadership, and in their ethnic mix. The Lutheran Church was not universal and did not attract the same loyalty as the Catholic Church: nor had it ever played a comparably nationalist role. Nationalism had flowed through the secular channels of associationist and party politics. In the inter-war years, conservatism was dominated by agrarian interest parties, like the Farmers' Union of Estonia and the Peasants' League in Latvia, unlike Christian Democracy in Lithuania.

Furthermore, nationalism, and in particular, separatism, were tempered by the large Russian and Slavic immigrant presence: in 1989, the Latvians were only 52% of the Latvian Republic with 34% Russian but 42% Slavic. Even more, Riga, the capital, had a Slavic majority with 56.9%. Estonia was a trifle better with the Republic being just 61.5% Estonian and the capital, Tallinn, once again with a minority Estonian population of just 47.4%. On the other hand, the Lithuanians were better off with a 79.6% presence in Lithuania. The local communist parties 'protective' role here had much to do with stopping what appeared an imminent absorption by the Slavs.

A his was done as usual through language politics and finding a development strategy that dispensed with labour in-migration. Thus, during the 1950s, the group around Edvards Berklavs, the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers (Deputy Chief Minister in our parlance) sought to promote, light and food industries which would not need such migration as the machine and diesel industries. It meant accepting a slower growth rate and facing the ire of Moscow. One of Arvid Pelshe's charges against Berklavs when he dismissed the latter in 1959 was of braking the 'socialist industrialization', which was the code word for speeded up investment and growth in the capital goods sector. One of the immediate consequences of Pelshe's accession was an expansion of heavy industry. But this did not help Latvia too much since both the expanding service sector and the declining agricultural sector needed labour, which came only through immigration.

However, the structural problem of large-scale Slavic in-migration was due to the high level of development leading to low birth rates in both countries as with industrially developed societies everywhere. Immigrant labour was a fact of prewar, pre-Soviet times already. Thus there was no permanent ethnic security in a multi-ethnic polity like the Soviet; on the other hand, independence might at least appear to provide a species of greater control of the home country. It would permit such compensations as a linguistic nationalism, discrimination in appointments, and even periodic outbursts of racism, the disease that follows from polyglot ethnicity mixing with nationalist ideologies. Thus, the hybrid ethnic composition of Estonia and Latvia, long treated as the best reason for their retention in the USSR, would have contributed as much to committed separatism, even if such separatism could never resolve the problem of the in-migration of labour.

Une final but extremely significant point should be noted in the context of development levels and separatism. All these countries, but particularly Latvia and Estonia, were marked by very high levels of development, making them exceptional to the Soviet Union. Further, from their earliest incorporation into the Russian empire, they had developed in advance of Russia herself, whether it was in the abolition of serfdom (in Latvia and Estonia in 1816-19, in Russia only in 1861, in Lithuania in 1863), high educational standards, as with the Universities of Tartu and Vilnius, and a more developed bourgeoisie and professional stratum. They were integrated into the German and Swedish academic and scientific worlds. Consequently, Russia never did represent, then or in later Soviet times, the face of progress or the example of modernity.

Soviet planning strategies faithfully preserved this advanced and exceptional level instead of attempting to equalize by lowering standards. Modernity to this intelligentsia meant an orientation westward to America and Europe, not eastward to Russia. This was in sharp contrast with Central Asia, which was culturally more distanced from Russia but nonetheless more oriented to her as the more developed and progressive, in a manner typical of a colonial intelligentsia. To the Baltic, there were no perceived advantages of belonging to the USSR save of security; and, if security could be assured by international guarantees, separatism acquired a compelling logic. The ambiguities of the colonial intelligentsia with respect to the foreign ruler did not haunt the Baltic intelligentsia. There was little indeed then for which the Baltic needed to cling to the USSR when the option for a separation came up.

# To each his own nationalism

LEOKADIA DROBIZHEVA

WITH the passage of time it becomes even more evident that national conflicts in this country germinated more in the context of the political power struggle than of the national renewal stimulated by democratization. National relations in the political arena have already gone through two stages. The first stretched from 1988 to early 1990. Then the epicentre of tension was the relations between the centre and the republics. The leaders of social movements outlined the essential ideas of national renewal. They posed the question of the losses inflicted

by a totalitarian regime on the people, on ecology, and on national languages and cultures. The discussion was premised on the idea of real sovereignty. We then saw all forms of struggle for sovereignty and self-determinations, from parliamentary methods to strikes and armed conflicts (Transcaucasia, Moldova). This period culminated in the declaration of sovereignty by the Union Republics, and of independence by the Baltic and Moldova.

The second phase lasted from late spring to summer 1990. It overlaps in part (spring) with the first. Then the focus was the relations between the centre and the Russian Federation, the struggle for the sovereignty of Russia, with the rise to power of democratic forces led by Yeltsin. As we well know, the main question

This article has been translated from the Russian by Madhavan K. Palat.

<sup>\*</sup>Professor Drobizheva and the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences to which she belongs, play an important role as consultants to the Russian parliament's committees on national questions

then was whether the declaration of sovereignty by Russia would mark the end of the Union (remember the terrifying predictions that Yeltsin would liquidate the Union) or the possibility of a new foundation.

eighing their capacities, the republics would agree among themselves, so don't hinder them, was the attitude of many in Russia and the other republics. However, as they sign treaties, what would be the centre's role in this process? It was one for the administrative structures and another among the political forces. The Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union judged their capacity for influence according to the role played by the former autonomous republies and regions in the negotiation and treaty process.

The third phase began with late summer to autumn 1990. The republics of Russia became the eye of the storm. From then on they were recognized by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR as subjects of the Union.1 Abkhasia played the leading role in this. Their representatives defended this position in their struggle for separation from Georgia and the centre supported them. It soon became clear that, having become subjects of the Union, the formerly autonomous units (or 'autonomies' as they are called) could influence all the negotiations leading up to the treaty. All the former autonomous republics with the exception of Nakhichevan in Azerbaijan and Ajaria in Georgia declared their sovereignty. They proclaimed themselves republics within the RSFSR in four out of the five autonomous regions (oblasts) of Adigei, Gorno-Altai, Khakass, and Karachevo-Cherkess. Checheno-Ingushetia decided to set up independent republics of Chechenia and Ingushetia. The autonomous circles (okrug) of Chekhotsk, Koraiksk, and Iamalo-

1. Subject, in Russian (and Soviet, indeed pre-Soviet also) jurisprudence means a sovereign individual Hence 'subject of the Union' means a sovereign entity voluntarily entering the Union This compares with the status of the various European states of the forthcoming European Union and differs from the states of the Indian Union which are not sovereign entities.

Nenets demanded a shift of status as autonomous republics within the RSFSR.

Thus, without the Union Republics, there could be 23 or 26 subjects, not just 18 or 19, claiming the right to participate in the negotiations. The last presidential project of a treaty provided that all republics, whether Union or autonomous, would be equally subjects of the Union and would enjoy equal rights. It was entirely up to them whether they were to remain in the Union or. not. According to the leadership of the RSFSR, this concealed a fundamental contradiction. S.M. Shakhrai, for example, then felt that a single Russia 'would be liquidated by such a Union', since both the part (the autonomies of the RSFSR) and the whole (the Russian Federation) could not meaningfully be accorded the same rights. This meant that they might exit from Russia and the Union.

L he August putsch capitalized on the disintegration of the former Union. The idea of independence could have flickered on for years together; but it flared up in the republics and 'consumed' the political cords, including in part the spiritual links as well. It must be said that actual independence was exercised in different ways in the former Union Republics. In some it was not only national but was quite as committed to personal values, as in the Baltic, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, and the Ukraine. In others it was confined to the state apparatus and public figures united by nationalist ideas. Therefore, in the new ethnopolitical relations, the question of the relations between the newly independent republics would be decisive. However, we do not know who would decide, whether only the former Union Republics or the other national political units also (e.g. Tatarstan). How we view this problem is thus of the greatest import.

National problems in the Russian Federation attracted attention only recently. There were three reasons for this. We have already commented on one of them—the political struggle. The second one is the stimulation of national consciousness

in conditions of democratization and openness. National movements in the Union Republics set off the autonomous peoples also, as also those who did not have their own state institutions or were denied them during the totalitarian regime. The fear of letting slip the opportunity of activating the intelligentsia pushed them into formulating nationalist demands.

The third one is that the sharp deterioration of economic conditions, food supply, daily life, and the disorganization of production has made people hunt for those responsible for such a state of affairs. The blame was squarely laid on the centre. In the Union Republics in 1987-88 itself, the unhappiness with the centre was projected on to the Russians; in the autonomies, it was openly expressed only later and not everywhere. Nevertheless, ethnic conflicts in certain former autonomies amounted to precisely such nationalist confrontation.

In view of the complexity of the situation, we must make an objective assessment of the post-war experiences of the non-Russian people of Russia. Only then may we appreciate the socio-cultural potential of these peoples, the changes in social status roles in relation to Russians in the Republics, and finally, the bases of national demands and claims. The All-Union censuses counted 128 nationalities living on the territory of Russia. Some authors would put it at 160.

L he Tatars are one of the most numerous in Russia. There are 5.5 million in Russia (total in the USSR 6.6. m.); and their numbers rise with each census. There are more than a million Bashkirs, Chuvash, Mordvins (that is, not less than Latvians and Estonians). There are more than half-a-million Udmurts. Mari, Chechens, and Jews. There are about 400,000 Yakuts and Kabardians. All the others add up to less than 200,000. Especially few in numbers are the people of the North, Siberia, and the Far East. For example, the Negialtsy and the Alcuts are altogether no more than 500 and a bit.

Only in six Republics, in Chuvashia, Tuva, Dagestan, North Osetia,

Checheno-Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria, are the titular nationalities in a majority. In six Republics they are as follows: the Tatars in Tatarstan are 48.4%; the Kalmyks in Kalmykia, and so on the Mari, Mordvin, Yakut, and Udmurt are 30-50% of their respective republics. Thus when the Khakass Autonomous Region (oblast) with 11.1% or the Jewish Autonomous Region (oblast) with 4.1% declare themselves republics, it arouses wonderment, to put it mildly.

Ethnic consciousness has recently begun to focus its attention on the ethnic demographic balance in a republic. For example, the Yakuts in their Republic rose in absolute terms from 295,000 in 1970 to 380,000 in 1989, but declined relatively from 46.4% in 1959 to 33.3% in 1989. Similarly, the proportion of Udmurts slipped from 35.6% to 30.9% over the same period, the Komi from 30.4% to 23.1% and the Mordvin from 35.8% to 32.5%. Indeed, the Mordvin have shrunk even absolutely from 174,000 to 154,000 which is a matter of the deepest anguish to the active part of the Mordvin intelligentsia.

A he Bashkirs have reacted similarly to their proportionate reduction in the Republic. With the rise of the Tatar national movement, that part of the Tatars which formerly returned themselves in the censuses of 1970 and 1979 as Bashkirs, now entered themselves as Tatars. And the Tatars in Bashkortostan are nearly 30% of the population, that is, more than even the Bashkirs. The Tatars suggest creating their own autonomy in Bashkortostan. But then, of course, where, is the Tatar autonomy to be, in Bashkortostan or Tatarstan? Thus another Karabakh rears its head.

Statistics likewise afflicts the Buriats. In absolute terms they increased from 314,000 in 1970 to 417,000 in 1989 and proportionately

in the Republic from 20% in 1959 to 24% today. Thus Buryats are not even a third of the population. More than 70% of this nationality lives outside the Republic, in the autonomous circles (okrug) of Ust-Ordynsk Buriat and the Aginsk-Buriat where they are more than 30% and 50% respectively of the population. The unification of the Buriat lands is therefore scarcely welcomed by the other inhabitants of these lands.

If demographic issues have become practically national and political for the peoples of the Republics of the Volga, Yakutia, and Buriatia, they are not so acute for the Republics of the North Caucasus. In Dagestan the original population is 80%; in Kabardino-Balkaria, North Osetia, and Checheno-Ingushetia, they are 50% and more. But nationalist tensions arising out of demographic issues surface even in these Republics. Thus, the birth rate of the titular nationality there is higher than among the Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians. In Tuva, for example, the birth rate of the Tuvinese is double that of the Russians; therefore their families are, as a rule, larger, and the standard of living, given equal salaries, lower. This arouses hostility towards the Russians. But the Tuvinese are hostile to demographic planning as an affront to their national dignity. Thus, just as in the Union Republics, demographic problems have become occasions for ethnic conflicts and have often entered the programmes of national renewal.

The changes in the social status of a people has a great impact on national self-perception and national relations. This aspect is deemed one of the most important in ethnic relations the world over. To it belongs the issue of the potential of each people, their sense of adequacy, as it were.

Until the 1960s there was an enormous gap between the non-Russians and Russians; the latter had about twice as many or more professionals, that is, specialists with higher education. After the 1960s, and especially during the 1970s and 1980s, the standard of education and qualification among all nationalities rose sharply. Among the

Buriats, Baskhirs, Tatars, Yakuts, Osetes, and Chechens, for example, it doubled at least. Therefore, the proportion of specialists with higher education among the Yakuts and Osetes today is approximately the same as among the Russians. And in Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and Karachaevo-Cherkesia, they are equalising.

In Buriatia, the 1970 census already showed higher education among the Buriats to be greater than among the Russians. Further, this difference is substantial within the employed population. According to the census of 1989, it was almost double. In the other Republics and Autonomous Regions (Oblasts), the original local population still lags behind significantly in education and qualification.

n such circumstances at least two important social features influence relations between nationalities: (a) The majority of the local population lives in rural areas; the Russians dominate in towns, in the advanced sectors of production in the academic world, and even in the arts, with rare exceptions as among the Buriats. (b) The local population rarely migrate beyond the frontiers of their region. This has been confirmed by ethno-sociological research also. All the active population is concentrated in the capitals; and naturally enough, this stimulates rivalry. These processes became even more obvious in the 1970s and the 1980s.

Thus there are emphatically objective conditions for the explosion of national self-consciousness, which we see today stretching from Tatarstan to the Yakutia-Sakhia Republic, from Komi and Karelia to North Osetia, Checheno-Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria. All that took place at the end of the 1960s and in the early 1970s in the multi-ethnic states of the West, in Canada or in Belgium, which matured in the Union Republics of the USSR at the end of the 1970s and in the early 1980s happened also, with some delay, in the former autonomies of the Union (even if in some cases the intelligentsia was energized a trifle earlier). On the one hand, the change in the status roles of the nationali-

<sup>2.</sup> Titular or eponymous nationality means the nationality which gives the Republic its name, not necessarily the majority or plurality of the Republic. Thus Tatars are the titular nationality of the Tatar Republic even if they are a minority there; Uzbeks are the titular nationality of Uzbekistan, because of the name and not because of their majority there.

ties coming into conflict with each other has led to a new assertiveness of the non-Russian people; on the other hand, to the Russian side, it has become a source of danger.

The development of their own intelligentsia, and the enormous capacity to disseminate national ideas through the mass media, created a new basis for these nationalities to become aware of their own interests. The processes which are taking place in the Republics are called national renewal by the intelligentsia. But not all accept this term. Those who used to direct culture in the past, before perestroika, protest that they had provided for education for all, and supported national theatre, art, and literature. Those who now rise to leadership are using this idea in meetings, in discussions, and in the press.

What does this mean in effect? The restoration of the national language is the primary focus of attention. They want first that this subject be more openly discussed. Second, because language links the consciousness of a people with their unique culture and is seen as a factor of togetherness, it is deemed necessary for consolidation. Language, as the fundamental attribute of ethnicity, has retained its firm hold on the consciousness of a people. In the Caucasus, nearly 100% returned their national language during the national census (99.7% among the Chechen, 98.8% among the Kaberdinians and Avars, and 98% among the Lezghians) although some of them had lived among other ethnic groups during the time of repression of nationalities (the Chechen, Ingush, Balkars etcetera).

The Volga people had very considerably switched to the Russian language in towns owing to its prestige as the language of all-Union communication. It therefore not only went out of everyday speech but even as the basis for national and ethnic identification. If during the 1959 census 89% of the Komi and the Udmurts, 95.5% of the Mari, and 78% of the Mordvins described the national language as their mother tongue, by the 1979 census it was down to 77% among the Komi, 77.6% among the Ud-

murts, 87.7% among the Mari, 74.6% among the Mordvins etcetera, i.e. ethnic assimilation was clearly going ahead. Similar tendencies could be noted among the Yakuts. Those returning their national language fell from 98% in 1959 to 95% in 1989.

he number of Tatars claiming Tatar as their mother tongue before 1979 declined, though not significantly, from 92% in 1959 to 88% in 1979. But 47% used Russian at work in towns, and as many used both languages. And even at home, nearly half the Tatars in Kazan and about 40% in other towns spoke in Russian or two languages. Among the Buriats, Udmurts, Mordvins and Mari, to judge from soundings, at least one-third of the youth had no command of their native tongue. The orientation to the Russian language was compelling. Surveys in Tataria, Chuvashia, Mari, Mordovia and Tuva in the 1970s and early 1980s revealed that the demand for instruction of Russian was greater than the capacity of Russian schools. This tendency is fully comprehensible since post-secondary education was in Russian. In towns, Russian dominated.

Now, however, changes are occurring in this sphere. In ethnic circles, Tatars, Udmurts, Yakuts, and even more, the Caucasian peoples, are turning to their native languages once again. The national language has become a symbol of ethnic consciousness; and this is reflected in the census returns. The national language returned as the mother tongue has risen from 1979 to 1989 from 88% to 96.5% among the Tatars, from 67% to 74% among the Bashkirs, 94% to 98% among the Osetians, 74.6% to 88.4% among the Mordvins and so on. The Republics have passed new laws on national languages. Unlike the Union Republics, the republics of the Russian Federation have legislated two state languages, the national and Russian. The matter has not yet been resolved in Bashkortostan because of the peculiar ethnic composition there.

In Yakutia, Bashkiria, Tataria, Buriatia, Tuva, and the Republics of the North Caucasus, the intelli-

gentsia have raised the question of post-secondary education in the national languages; but there are no teachers as yet in the various disciplines and the matter remains open. The eponymous nationality is increasing its proportionate representation in the various soviets. Thus, in the Supreme Soviet of Tatarstan in 1990, it was 57.6% compared with 49.2% previously. In Yakutia-Sakha, 50.9% against 48.5%. In the regional and urban soviets of these republics it has risen from 50.2% and 57 9% to 64.7% and 65.1% respectively in 1990. Considering that these nationalities are not majorities in the Republics, such changes are most remarkable. Hence also the predominance of the local nationality in leadership positions. In Tataria and Yakutia, for example, the Tatars and Yakuts are not less than threefourths of the soviets at all levels, whether of town, region or village. In Yakutia, 70% of the ministers are Yakuts.

We may therefore categorically state that the national-political forces have triumphed on the wave of democratization. In the Union Republics like the Baltic, Moldova, Ukraine or Armenia, the leaders of the national movements came to power or were incorporated into the political structure. The Russian Republics however used the existing political structures to satisfy national demands; and these were of fundamental significance to the political and socio-economic life of Russia and of the Union. In the open conflict between the centre and Boris Yeltsin, the centre could depend upon the government of the Republics.

During the summer and autumn of 1990 when the former autonomous Republics were ready to declare independence, Boris Yeltsin announced: 'take as much as you want'. At first he did not hinder the process of sovereignty declarations. The centre too did not block it: to a certain extent it even directed that process realizing that secession would weaken Russia. They could also expect the appropriate Russian reaction in the Republics, that Yeltsin would be accused of dismembering Russia. The litmus test of the real balance of forces then was the All-

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Union referendum. Tataria, North Osetia and then Checheno-Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria, declared that they would not raise the question of the Russian parliament (of Yeltsin's presidency).

Certainly, the national-patriotic forces at the helm in the republics have not exhausted their naturally active forces. Tataria, Bashkiria, Yakutia, Chuvashia, Udmurtia, and the Caucasian Republics have their own national associations, unions, and movements and programmes. One of the most potent, active, national-patriotic centres is to be found in Tataria. The Buriats have floated the idea of creating an All-Buriat Cultural Centre.

The process of putting into effect the demands of the ethnoses of the former autonomies does not make the political situation in the country uniform or homogenous. Given the underdeveloped state of the democratic movements in the Republics of Russia, the party and government structures have practically everywhere taken over the national idea for themselves. Consequently, the Russian leadership cannot, in the majority of cases, rely on them. And so it will remain, to judge by circumstances today, until democrats become absolute majorities in the former autonomies. But that needs time.

It is not always possible to predict whether the political or national interests will rise to the fore. Tataria is a splendid example. The majority of the deputies in the Russian parliament want a democratic election, but the Republic preferred to be outside Russia in case the Commonwealth of Independent States were to survive. The referendum in Tatarstan showed that out of the 81.7% who voted, 61.4% opted for a sovereign state of Tatarstan, which would then build relations with the Russian Federation and with the other Republics of the state through treaties between equals. This implies that Tatars would not sign the Federation Treaty and would sign only a bilateral treaty with Russia, although the President of Tatarstan has declared after the referendum that Tatarstan would not exit from Russia. And the Russian leadership must ceaselessly negotiate with Yakutia, Bashkortostan, Buriatia, and the North Caucasus Republics.

The Russian parliament and the Supreme Soviets of the Republics have still got to discuss and adopt the Constitution of the Russian Federation. It is well known that the draft of the Constitutional Commission of the Russian Federation provides for the entry of republics and other territories into Russia. The August and subsequent events had at least two ethno-political consequences for Russia. The spectacle of the disintegrating Union alarms Russians and all those to whom 'my vast homeland' was precious. The republican structures and the active elite groups of the eponymous nationalities, however, see this even more sharply as the historic moment to announce their rights and interests.

post-putsch situation, the something else has also become clear. Since there has not been and there still is no model of forming a commonwealth of states out of the former Union Republics, there is equally no reason to expect any such general models of conduct for the republics within Russia. The various political, economic, ethno-demographic circumstances of the historical past led to Tatarstan being one model, Yakutia, Tuva, and Buriatia being another, and Mordovia, Chuvashia, Udmurtia, and Kalmykia being a third one. The North Caucasian Republics also scarcely have a single type of relationship with Russia, if only because the idea of an Islamic union can not be welcome to Christian North Osetia, in addition to the geopolitical situasion and tensions in inter-ethnic relations.

It is already clear that unlike the other Republics of the North Caucasus, Chechnia will not sign the Federation Treaty. If we are to remain democratic in such circumstances, it would be hardly possible to avoid multiple type of intergovernmental agreements. In order to remain one, Russia will perhaps have to go in for special negotiations with separate nationalities by proposing to them special ethnic state statuses for the future.

# The dance of sovereignties

DEV MURARKA

THE implosion of the Soviet universe which occurred between August and December 1991 had its specific features. The destruction of the country's structure was determined by an unconstitutional political coup carried out in the course of a few hours by three republican leaders meeting in Minsk—Boris Yeltsin, Leonid Kravchuk and Stanislav Shushkevich. Yeltsin reported the decision first of all to the American President George Bush in Washington for approval of the deed done. President Bush has only two functions these days—to fight the elections and to respond to the phone calls of the numerous new leaders of the ex-USSR, managing their affairs.

Thus the real coup took place not in Foros-Moscow on 18-19 August 1991 but in Minsk on 8 December 1991, when the three Slavic nations of the Soviet Union declared it to be non-existent and founded the Commonwealth of Independent States. It would be comparable to the three cow-belt Chief Ministers meeting over whisky and soda in Patna and declaring the Indian Union out of existence. It was a measure of the decay of all the administrative, juridical, legal and political institutions of this once great and powerful country that the Minsk coup succeeded so easily. After that Mikhail Gorbachev's vacation of the Soviet Presidency on 25 December 1991

was only a formality. Without having to arrest him, the democrats achieved one of the major goals of the August putschists.

The uniqueness of this 'achievement' should be grasped. The country was fragmented so unceremoniously because of the duel between Gorbachev and Yeltsin and in order to get rid of one of the very few genuine and great democrats, who stood in the way of the power ambitions of persons his policies had raised to prominence. In order to undermine Gorbachev, Yeltsin cared not what else he undermined. In its essence the Minsk conspiracy was not entirely a move to liberate the constituent territories of the Union from a tyrannical centre, though there was some element of this, but to remove Gorbachev from power. This could not be done without dissolving the centre because none of the new political leaders who had emerged during perestroika could hope to lead the whole country, now awakened under Gorbachev to assert their diversity. They, including Yeltsin, were too provincial.

Initially, these new leaders raised and exploited the slogan of autonomy from the centre. Thus emboldened, and having carried the tide of public opinion with them, they quickly turned it into an issue of sovereignty. The political rhetoric around the subject totally erased the

as inter-regional, and even within the successor states. Chaos reigns, production is going down and prices are going up and supplies of any kind of goods have become insufficient, uncertain or simply ceased. Huge plants are standing idle. It has been commonplace to point out that the economic space needs to be preserved for the renewal of the economy as a whole. But it was and remains an illusion to think that political space can be dispensed with in the name of sovereignty without shrinking the economic space. The example of the European Economic Community is irrelevant in this context because the political and social circumstances were entirely different there.

aturally, it will take a long time before any leadership can make sense of their fragmented economies. But what is adding to the difficulties is their dogged determination to accept models which are clearly unsuitable to their immediate circumstance, simply because they are showered by such advice from the West. Yeltsin talks for long hours to somebody from Harvard University called Jeffrey Sachs, who has left a trail of social destruction in Bolivia and Poland and is sold on a programme which has little to do with the economic and social reality of Russia.

It is the same in all the CIS states. The advisors must be American to be credible. Moreover, they are now being prodded to go in a certain direction through financial stick and carrot. The repeated and open interventions of American leaders during the April crisis between Yeltsin and the Congress of Deputies, threatening to withhold any financial aid if the Congress went against Yeltsin, was a piquant demonstration of the real state of Russian sovereignty. This, in spite of the fact that the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe has unambiguously warned against pushing the East European countries too hard and without proper preparation towards the market economy quagmire.

It would be reasonable to imagine that claiming to be liberated from one ideology, the new democratic

leaders would be adverse to adopting yet another. Yet they appear to be perversely bent upon embracing a counter ideology, regardless of the price, though they claim they have no ideological approach. J. M. Keynes, one of the founding fathers of modern capitalist doctrines, had trenchantly observed: 'Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Mad men in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back.'

The observable reality in the CIS is that already the democratic leaders have strayed far from democratic paths. They are already acquiring an authoritarian gloss. It is of extreme relevance in this context that almost all of them are former Communist Party chinovniks or officials liberated by the perestroika and glasnost carried out by Gorbachev. Their Stalinist past is reasserting itself with a vengeance. The explanation of their failure, regardless of all the radical sounding promises and words and brave posturings, lies in their past. For this reason, though they are new to power, they already give the impression of extinct volcanoes.

Their innate Stalinism manifests in two particular ways. First of all, it can be seen in their intolerance of any opposition. This results in their ignoring any advice which they do not want to hear and threatening their opponents with a variety of punishments. Thus, Ruslan Khazbulatov, the Chairman of the Russian Federation Supreme Soviet, often behaves like martinet to members of the Supreme Soviet and Congress of Deputies, threatens newspapers and so on.

Alternatively, populism is used to instil compliance with the policies of leadership. For instance, faced with a near-majority demand by the Congress of Deputies to give up the prime ministerial post and appoint a new cabinet within a short period of time, Yeltsin, whose popularity has acquired a teflon-like immunity from all criticisms of his conduct, threatened to dissolve the Congress

and call for a referendum, confident of winning it. At the time of writing, the outcome is still not known but it appears more than likely that Yeltsin will carry out his threat unless the Congress gives in. In power, the democrats have become as proficient in organized hypocrisy as was the CPSU officialdom.

Another Stalinist characteristic is their increasingly authoritarian, almost one-man attempts to decide all policies and carry them out. These same democratic leaders heaped abuse on Gorbachev, denounced him as an incipient dictator, mobilized mass protests against him when he sought presidential authority. Though the right wing may have betrayed Gorbachev, it is the democrats who made it impossible for him to exercise authority in any shape or form, which in the end brought about his downfall. Now the Kravchuks and Yeltsins are demanding more and more personal and untrammeled powers as presidents so that they can by-pass the parliament, rule by decree and take ad hoc decisions, be it about the economy or social and political issues. It appears they do not consider themselves secure and able to function without such personal power.

Yeltsin has a pronounced tendency to sign decrees, sometimes almost out of a hat. It is not surprising that most of such decrees remain just pieces of paper and are hardly ever implemented. This disease has travelled down to lower levels as well. Even city mayors and district officials love issuing their own decrees, some of them even designating themselves local prime ministers. Certainly, there is a surfeit of presidents, prime ministers, chairmen and what not on a countrywide, scale and bureaucracies are being duplicated many times over. And my, don't they all love the pomp and circumstance of state and official visits, the signing of treaties and documents! They can now indulge in-it with other members of the CIS. They are all independent states, aren't they?

The question is not whether they are good or bad leaders. It is that they do not seem to have freed their minds of the arrogant Stalinist con-



viction that the people do not understand their own interests as they do or cannot organize their lives without them. All this tells negatively on institution-making for democracy, a vitally urgent task if democracy is to actually flourish and survive in the post-communist society all over the former USSR. The starting point of the democrats, which won them such overwhelming public support, was that the country must be thoroughly democratized and any kind of authoritarianism should become anathema. Unfortunately, and to the contrary, authoritarianism is now being made respectable under democratic garbs and slogans, and new bases are being created not only for the abuse of power in the future but weakening even the incipient democracy which has emerged so far.

L he bloodbath and civil war which Georgia has already gone through in the very short period fol-Jowing the establishment of a freely elected democratic regime because of the harsh authoritarianism practised by President Zviad Gamsakhurdia should be a warning that cavalier treatment of democratic institutions is a thoroughly unhealthy precedent. Azerbaijan has also experienced similar turbulence. In the case of the CIS states, none of whom have really experienced democracy within living memory, and in many cases in centuries, its fragile quality requires utmost scrupulousness and sensitivity from the political leaders in their conduct. So far this has not been forthcoming. They may have ceased to be Marxists, if they ever were. But can they get away from the basic Marxist premise that politics and economics are closely linked together and that outside of Marxist theories 'the ques--tion of liberty is indissolubly intertwined with the economic problem?

In politics, as in nature, everything has to be paid for. The victorious democrats, both before and after their success, showed scant regard for authority, institutions or juridical formalities, and treated everything with contempt. They instilled among the public as well as among bureaucrats at all levels the view that instructions from the top are to be treated with contempt. They, in their

turn, are now suffering from a crisis of authority. They may pass laws, issue presidential decrees: it changes nothing because they themselves have taught everybody to ignore laws and decrees. Besides, the democrats show all the signs of having lost a sense of direction and this bewilders people, whose expectations from them were very high, unrealistically high.

It is inescapable, under these circumstances, that the society as a whole is very frustrated and demoralized. Owing to their antipathy towards the old establishment, people are still by and large on the side of democrats, but that goodwill is eroding. In many cases their personal integrity has come under a cloud, and their endless rhetoric and posturing have become tiring. Moreover, a feeling is also growing that perhaps, after all, these ex-party bosses do not have it in them to deliver the goods. Cynicism about politics in general is taking root.

To some extent it is a healthy sign, a necessary advance of political consciousness in a society inexperienced in democracy, traversing the gamut from romantic optimism to disillusionment. In short, coming down to earth with more realistic and modest expectations. But the process entails its own dangers along the path. It should be recognized that after all the abuse, revolutions and wars it has endured, Russian society is very sick. Its aspirations for democracy, which primarily signify a desire to be left alone and a better material life, also make it prone to extremist exploitations of all kinds which play with the hopes of the people. In the Russian Presidential election of 1991, while Yeltsin received the mandate for leadership he was seeking from the people, what surprised and shocked the observers was that a relatively unknown demagogue, Vladimir Zhiri-novsky, tinged with racism and Russian chauvinism, and openly advocating a return to authoritarianism, received well over six million votes and came third.

It represented the dark side which is still hidden from the outside world despite the democratization of the country in recent years. These sinister tendencies may come to the fore if democrats fail to resolve problems and relieve the misery of the people. There is also the danger that in their determination to make thoughtless economic experiments, the democrats might cause such damage to the welfare of a wide swathe of the underprivileged that it will fall a prey to authoritarian temptation once again. There is nothing inherently implausible in such a scenario as may be seen from the rise of racism and xenophobia in the former communist countries of East Europe, and in Germany and France. Why should the Russians and others of the CIS prove to be more virtuous?

Moreover, we have already seen signs of ethnic violence in Kazakhstan, Kirgizia, Tadjikistan and Uzbekistan in recent years, not to mention parts of Russia as well. Russian minorities in the newly independent states are also under pressure. They might even become subject to violent repression, for instance, in Moldova. The wild dance of sovereignty has turned the whole country into a tinder box which can be all too easily ignited into a conflagration. Russia is not immune from such a development.

It would be good to end on an optimistic note about 'the future of the CIS and Russia. Unhappily, objective realities give little cause for. cheer. No one can forecast what exactly will replace socialism and totalitarianism in the territories of the ex-USSR. For the time being what seems to have taken over is a kind of imbecilism: in politics, in economic policy, in the intellectual community, and in moral values. Led by leaders who themselves are confused in the extreme and do not seem to know where they are going, what they are doing, and why they are doing it, people are being driven like lemmings, supposedly towards a market economy, whatever that means, and national glories. A rude awakening awaits them all. Some are already paying the price with their blood. It will be cold comfort for them to ponder over the prophetic observation made by Trotsky: 'Any one desiring a quiet life has done badly to be born in the twentieth century.'

48

# What do you believe, or don't you believe at all'

LYUDMILA SARASKINA

A COUPLE of youngsters meet at a petty provincial Russian town, and a cheap eatery. 'Tell me,' says one of them, 'why have we come here? In order to talk about .. foreign countries? About the dreadful condition of Russia? About the Emperor Napoleon? No, not at all. It is one thing for others. But for us in our tender youth, it is quite another. Before anything else we we have to deal with the eternal questions. All young Russia can now discuss only the eternal questions just as our elders have turned to practical matters. 'What do you believe, or don't you believe at all....' And those who don't believe in God have started talking about socialism and anarchism, about recasting all of humanity in a new mould, such that they present the same features ultimately, the very same problems, only starting at the other end.'

How many times already have I re-read this famous scene in a tavern where the brothers Ivan and

\*Lyudmila Saraskina is a well-established authority on Dostoevsky, and has been an enthusiastic contributor to the radical press, especially Maskovskie Novosti. She travels frequently within and outside Russia on lecture tours and conferences. This article explores a peculiar and widespread state of mind, especially during 1991: It reveals a dimension of Russian life that is generally not known in India, the reflection on faith, both religious and atheistic, and its relation to both the ritual of the Church and the dogmas of the Party. Most of all, it is a problem well over a hundred years old in Russia. Translated from the Russian by Madhavan K. Palat.

Alesha Karamazov declare their symbols of faith. While doing so once again, let me attempt to set their dialogue against our current disputes on religion, and more, to that spiritual condition which prevails at present.

The persecution of religion has ceased. It is possible to buy the Bible freely. New churches are being opened; old ones are being restored; and monasteries are being founded anew. The millennium of the conversion of Russia to Christianity was triumphantly celebrated. There is much discussion going on now, not only on the theme of 'what do you believe' but as much on whether it is possible to treat these events as a religious renaissance.

To employ Ivan Karamazov's expression, the picture appears thus: while our senior, that is to say, perestroikshchiks, have suddenly busied themselves with practical concerns, the rest of Russia is soaking up religion and going to church.

To tell the truth, only the word 'suddenly' appears to me appropriate in this context. Not long ago, this country was held in a vice-like grip. The USSR was a land of mass atheism; the Soviet people did not need religious consolation; and the social roots of religion had been torn out. And then suddenly, in about 1988, the dam of religious proscription burst. Religion became the favoured and most prestigious theme in the press, radio, and television. There is no political repor-

tage or superhit in which religion does not figure. Party activists and officials used to apologise to their audiences for letting slip such routine expressions as 'Thank God' and 'God forbid'; but now, with something akin to frenzy, they kiss the bishop's hand, seek the blessings of the patriarch, and manage an audience with the Pope.

After having distinguished them-selves on the 'ideological front' in the struggle against 'the opium of the people', the members of the In-stitute of Scientific Atheism have become respectable historians of religion and travel to gatherings abroad to discuss the divine creation. The militant godless sift through their ancient publications on the theme of 'The Struggle with Religion is the Struggle for Socialism' for biblical citations with which they used to denounce but now exploit as a spiritual resource. Ideologists who lived on two or three slogans like 'Religion is the stronghold of obscurantism, obstacle to culture, and handmaiden of capital', now suddenly declaim louder than the rest: 'Religion is the source of creativity, the basis of spiritual life.'

The situation is simple to the point of absurdity. There were carcerist-secularists like Rakitin in the very same Brothers Karamazov, defrocked priests who turned to revolution; and now we have the new usurpers, defrocked commissars with pretensions to the monopoly of eternal values. In utterly routine fashion, they have just turned things on its head. In keeping with the needs of the new thinking, religion has been mobilized in aid of reforms, as their embellishment and attribute, in other words, as a sociopolitical appendage.

The state and its machinery of propaganda, having squeezzed all that was possible out of its native communist ideology, and having delivered to the world a sickly mouse, has now turned to this new gold-bearing seam. And all that relates to the deepest layers of consciousness and of the emotional world of man have been crassly and brazenly made the subject of advertisement and of self-promotion. The

exploitation of religious feeling and of venerated sites has become an equivalent of petrodollars to official propaganda. And bearing in mind this hunger for faith, the longing for eternity, this natural reaction of the people to total atheism, our agitators are pumping out an inexhaustible resource.

People are increasingly convinced that it is effortlessly simple to adopt a world-view by following the dictum that everything is permitted if it is not prohibited. This means that there are no torments of doubt, no intimately personal choices, only the sanctioned 'hosannahs', a comfortable participation in a state-run campaign, be it the Lenin Saturday or Subbotnik, or for the folk song festival, Russkaya Zima. Swinging from one ideology to the polar opposite, substituting spiritual quest and intense labour for coquetting and the fashion, society runs the risk of being caught in the trap of a herd consciousness. And that which on the surface looks like crude propaganda, tastelessness and philistinism, or in a word, kitsch, in fact reveals a yearning for spiritual totalitarianism and ideological despotism.

During the first week of Lent my schoolgoing son began preparing for the weekend. 'On Sunday,' he informed me, 'we are going from school to Zvenigorod to celebrate Shrovetide. We have been told to pack pancakes with sour cream.'

'But Shrovetide is already over,' I protested. 'It is Lent now.'

'I know mama, but the teachers could not make it last Sunday, they were busy, and there were no buses. So they have shifted the holiday by a week.'

As the organisers of the holiday explained later in Zvenigorod, 'So what, a week earlier or later, what's the difference as long as the weather was fine.' Such are the first reactions to the eternal 'What do you believe'. The twitching word 'suddenly', like magic crystal, helps to bring order into the chaos of euphoria and gloom, into the combination of the true and the false

religiosity, spiritual search and spiritual consumption.

In this series of eternal questions which now preoccupy Russia, the first one is that of Orthodoxy. Let me turn again to Dostoevsky. One of the most frenzied disputants in the novel, The Possessed, seized by eternal questions, Ivan Shatov preaches: 'The object of every national movement, in every people and at every period of its existence, is only the seeking for its God, who must be its own God, and the faith in Him as the only true one. God is the synthetic personality of the whole people taken from the beginning to the end.' The fact that today's God-seeking and God-building is oriented to Orthodoxy and that the very concept of religious revival is understood as the revival of Orthodoxy, is very much in the nature of things. For the majority of Russians, cruelly wrenched from religion, the time has now come not so much to search for their God as for the return to the bosom of traditional culture and of the Church.

Delonging to the Orthodox tradition myself, I cannot but rejoice in the Russian Orthodox Church's emergence from its internal emigration and in the revival of Russian religious-philosophical thought. I can indeed appreciate how fresh, attractive and stirring appears that ocean of the human spirit. These are enormous riches suddenly rising from the depths of time. But as a person who has not so such found the truth as still seeks it, I cannot set aside anxious thoughts and questions, without answers to which any search for God will be an outright profanation, a species of religious tour-

I fear for Orthodoxy should it claim the status of an official religion. I fear for it should it become an institution of state and wish to discharge the functions of the former ideological section of the oblast committees of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. I fear religious agitation and propaganda lest its activists pursue those who believe otherwise. I am afraid, because all this has already happened in our country. There used to be three pillars of the Russian empire, Autocracy, Orthodoxy, and then Nationa-

lity, which then engendered a fourth one, the Russian Revolution. There used to be a compulsory state religion, and heresy used to be persecuted. Sects were harried, Leo Tolstoy was excommunicated, and outbursts of areligious intolerance used to occur.

While restoring the Orthodox tradition and our lost faith and Church have we insured ourselves against a repetition of the past? Observe how the participants in the conference on 'Roman Catholicism and the Orthodox World' have declared their 'Orthodoxy is a article of faith: holy faith, which alone without any doubt would save mankind and raise it to the true Christian mission and worth.' Any dialogue with Catholicism was thus at once rebuffed; ecumenical contacts were rejected as an outright menace; and the rite of the triumph of Orthodoxy has been restored in full measure, that is, the divine service will resound to anathemas against heretics.

I am deeply troubled by another agonizing thought, not about the faith but trust in the Church. Thus, for example, I come to the church and approach the priest. Who is he, a mediator between me and God? In order to avoid embarrassment, I probably have to provide myself with my own parson as I would with my own doctor, turner, or jeweller. Indeed there is a story doing the rounds in Moscow that the distinguished philosopher. Alexei Losev refused extreme unction on his deathbed. I have visions of epaulettes under the cassock, he is reputed to have said.

Even I know of occasions when the Central Committee of the Komsomol (the Communist Party Youth Organization) used to send candidates for training to the seminary. I don't know how reliable is the assertion that a good half of the priesthood are officers of the KGB; but even priests did not deny that they were intimately linked with the intelligence and propaganda apparatus of the state. And what do we do about the bitter truth that many pastors of the Russian Orthodox Church were guilty of the sin of reporting?

The problem however does not lie in the number of sins. It lies in the fundamental refusal of the Church, as represented by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, to repent of its former errors. Considering itself the supreme institution of mankind and having announced itself the repository of absolute worth, the Church admits and sanctions all that contributes to this. But surely, that was how even the Bolsheviks justified their methods: all that served the Revolution was moral. What then is the difference? Is the Church hierarchy, thanks to its flourishing condition, again going to assist the temporal power to realize its potential, to pour the wine of Orthodoxy into the official wineskin, as they had done formerly?

And the third question is surely the most important. The Orthodox religion is other-worldly in its fundamental spiritual orientation, not this worldly. To what extent is it possible and necessary to expect the succour of the Church in this world? Can Orthodoxy today act as a spiritual guide after having suffered such a stunning defeat 75 years ago? Why could it not prevent the spiritual, social and political catastrophe of 1917, why could it not stop the civil war between co-religionists? Why did the God-fearing Russian people so lightly cast down their gods and tear down the crosses from their churches?

Is it true then that there is a fatal congenital defect in Russian religious thought, its extraordinarily unpractical nature, its distance from the social, its helplessness in the world of real politics, its remoteness from all that is transitory and pragmatic? Is there a causal relation between the moral beauty of Russian thought and the squalor of Russian social experience? And why do all great transformations in Russia produce that scum which harass and wear out a Chaadayev, a Florensky or a Sakharoy?

In all the clamour about the Orthodox Church, neither the Church itself nor those in need of its ministry touch upon these questions. The search for God goes through the ritual processes which consist not so much of spiritual labour as pom-

pous ceremonial and theatre. And while the ecclesiastical nomenklatura¹ issues sundry pronouncements, embellishes official delegations on foreign tours and cruises, and plays clever politics through so-called extra-clerical bodies, simple and believing souls go everywhere in search of miracles.

And they find them, but in sources of extremely dubious repute. A month after the marvellous restoration and solemn transfer of the relics of St Serafim Sarovskii, I had a most curious conversation with one of my old friends, a true Orthodox believer. 'We might have hoped,' he observed, 'that such a grand event for the Orthodox world, one which has occurred just as prophesied, and has been presented to the world as a long-awaited marvel, would arouse great enthusiasm. But if we were to compare the miserably few hundred that welcomed the holy relics at the Leningrad station and the hundreds of thousands at meetings on the Manezhnaya Ploshchad at about the same time, it is sad and shameful. And indeed, all that was necessary was to rise early for the morning train. Our faith is both poor ond feeble, and thus the holy miracle passes us by,' he lamented.

In any case the people who understood Christianity as the religion of the crucifled Christ and attended church in order to serve the truth and to suffer with Christ, were never numerous. The more frequent visitors to church are neophytes whose attitudes are consumerist. They want the church to provide them with solace or to resolve their spiritual problems. It is possible that for the benefit of this majority one myth of the Church was replaced by another. And what we see today and what we read and hear of the Church are extremely remote from reality. As the Moscow priest, Andrei Kurayev, neatly observed, the mass media presents to us not the icons of the Church, its being, or its ontological structure but the wooden surface on which are painted its life.

<sup>1.</sup> Nomenklatura, the pejorative term for the ruling elite within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, denoting corruption, nepotism, clientelism, careerism, cynicism and a closed caste in itself.

But I have to say something that is more obvious and controversial. There is the faith and the believer, and this phenomenon of spiritual experience is always more or less stable. And then there is the interest in the Church and those interested in the faith. This is the experience and category of persons which are unstable. We seem to be witness today to some sort of an obfuscation by which faith is replaced by an interest in it. In what measure are the creative artist and the crowds visiting his gallery comparable? Is it possible to bridge the natural gap between them through educational or cultural methods? No, would say any sensible and educated person. Yes, would insist the observant reader and TV watcher with respect to the politics of religious propaganda.

Newspapers, periodicals, and television are packed with the ritual side of Orthodoxy. There is scarcely a publication which would not inform you on how to decorate Easter eggs, how to bake an Easter cake, how to sing songs, how to dress for a Church holiday, and how long a church service should last. All this, repeated day in and day out on the video screen, can lead many to the conclusion that there is an attempt to convert the Church into a ritual and ethnographic museum, into one of the obligatory stops on the Intourist round.

And he who does not believe but is merely interested, to whom is not given his own personal spiritual experiences, but who wants to believe, I repeat, in something, he will find in such a museum all that he seeks. Here there will be a new language and pseudo-Orthodoxy, a national-patriotism, monarchism, extra-sensory perceptions, psychotherapy, flying saucers, as well as the most varied chiromancy, hypnosis, magic and shamanism. All this jointly and severally constitute today's equivalent of spirituality; they are encouraged, perpetuated and nurtured equally.

Let me come back to the priest Andrei Kurayev. 'The first question that comes up in any audience is not about Christ but about Kashpirovsky, about UFOs etc. This is the field that was sold to the anti-Christ. Which of the two tendencies will grow in strength, Christ or anti-Christ, we don't know. But in the annals of human history, the fruit of this development is anti-Christian. And for me, I would be betraying those who trod the arduous path to attain Christ.'

Thus people who want to and can exist perfectly well without God hasten to enlist his support. Convinced pragmatists as they are, they seek allies wherever possible. And if such allies be the Church, so be it; and if it be Kashpirovsky, so be it also. An interest in a faith in anything that will provide spiritual succour is evidently the typical motive for abjuring mass atheism. The demand for something generates that unimaginable goulash of scraps of various ideologies, cults, frauds, and religious masquerade.

Dut here is another, more complex variant. A person attends church and thus establishes his relation to God. He observes the ritual. But then, overcome by doubt, he attempts to prove the existence of God. He then seeks evidence by the reverse process, to attain the faith from the other end, to approach God by the back door. In other words, those who do not come to faith in God directly, attempt to acquire it indirectly by convincing themselves of the existence of dark and mysterious forces. Indeed, if Satan exists, then so does God. Both exist, as it were, in the same spiritual dimension, even if only because both are denied by atheists.

Our times have turned out to be extraordinarily fertile for the growth of petty everyday Fausts who fortify their spirituality through black magic, occultism and outright devilry. A readiness to succumb to any powerful force, even if it be dark and evil, is unfortunately not a small part of the general interest in spiritual questions. Remember Mitya Karamazov: 'I can't endure the thought that a man of lofty mind and heart begins with the ideal of the Madonna and ends with the ideal of Sodom. What's still more awful

is that a man with the ideal of Sodom in his soul does not renounce the ideal of the Madonna, and his heart may be on fire with that ideal, genuinely on fire, just as in his days of youth and innocence.' On precisely this question and at the end of this monologue Mitya pronounced his verdict: 'Yes, man is broad, too broad indeed. I'd have him narrower.'

he fact is that today many of our true believers sincerely believe that it is better to remain without religion than to establish contact with the Devil through experience. During the service in the Bogoiavlenskii patriarchal Cathedral on Easter night, the whole country saw on television two extraordinary visitors, the heads of the Union government and of the Russian parliament. This spectacle aroused much idle curiosity as well as principled reflection. Why have senior leaders come especially to the Elokhavaya Church (the main patriarchal cathedral); are they parishioners or is it for the TV? 'Did their Easter vigil have a political meaning, e.g. two opposed forces being reconciled in Christ?' 'Have these former communists denied their atheistic convictions? In other words, looking at the temporal leadership attending a permitted celebration, people asked themselves, what does this dream portend?

In all probability this dream conveyed many things. The eloquent political gesture signified as much. A political person of any orientation must confess to godliness, since explicit atheistic conduct is compromising and held in the poorest repute today. It is identified with Lêninism and communism, that is militant, criminal, conscript-gang like, guilty of the destruction of cathedrals and monuments of the past, of persecuting culture, of destroying priests and those who were of the faith. Many recanting atheists recognized that blatant anti-religiosity was due to an obtuse and bigoted faith in party dogmas and social doctrines.

<sup>2.</sup> Kashpirovsky, a psychotherapist, very popular for his scances last year, and denounced as a charlatan by many.

<sup>3.</sup> Easter 1991; the Prime Minister of the USSR was Valentin Pavlov; and the head of the Russian parliament, that is, the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFRR, was Boris Yeltsin.

The disillusionment with atheism is one of the most serious spiritual phenomena of our times and, I feel, even deeper in essence than the repudiation of religion. People who were born and bred in an atheistic state and taught that religion is nonsense, suddenly realize that God was taken away from their parents and grandparents and that they themselves were cruelly deceived. The world of atheism is inevitably the world of man, whose property was confiscated even before his birth and who was forbidden even to think about the confession, as if it had never been. A hazy memory haunts man, but he has adjusted to the notion of a dead, prohibited or entirely nonexistent God, and somehow led his life without God and outside of God. And today this everyday normal world, cast in the atheistic mould, has gone completely bankrupt; and the people who accepted the atheistic rules issuing from above, now find themselves illegitimate occupants of their own homes.

▲t was also said: now go, you are free, you don't have to believe that God does not exist. But where was he to go, and to whom was he to turn? What was he to do with his freedom from total nihilism? It was said: in order to make a sauce out of egg you must have the egg. In order to believe in God there must be a God. And thus was proclaimed the return to religion, to the Church. But many atheists today have nowhere to return to, since they had nothing but those generations of the godless behind them. But then man was so made that having liberated himself from one system of values that turned out to be false, he went in search of another; often it was a switch from vulgar atheism to pseudo-religion.

I once heard the following bitter and despairing words from a middle-aged woman: 'God was ignored, immortal souls were abandoned, eternity was exchanged for the dull comfort of godlessness. From us was taken that which we do not have but which was perhaps the most important and precious in life. And now I wish to believe but I cannot and don't know how to. I hesitate to enter a church; it is

awkward for me. I don't know how to conduct myself, I don't know how to make the sign of the cross, how to set the candle. I feel that everyone is looking at me and laughing. I once went in and joined the line before the priest. Everyone was kissing his hand and he was blessing them. 'When my turn came, I lookat him, and he suddenly withdrew his hand and muttered something indistinctly. And thus it happened, I was an outcast, without a place in the Church.'

Thus today, persons brought up to atheism begin to feel themselves second-class citizens. However, it must be borne in mind that intellectual history knows another atheism, that which was a distinguished element of world culture, the result of intellectual and spiritual labour. This atheism did not originate in Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin, it had nothing in common with totalitarian thought, and was not inclined to coercion and self-assertion. What is its role in today's spiritual situation?

Let me cite one of the speeches from the Moscow seminar, 'Religion and the spiritual renaissance of society': 'Today we have to be anxious not about the fate of the believer and the one who has found the freedom of conscience but in that of the unbelievers, the atheists. In conditions of our distorted democracy, they are inclined to extremes, and may easily become social outcasts, fallen people. And indeed, they are not in the least "godless" or "anti-Christs" but just persons of another non-religious faith, who have found themselves an anchor other than the teaching of Christ or of Mohammed. Do we have the wit to deal with people for whom 'god" is their own conscience, a highly developed sense of moral responsibility, which they don't propose to shift to another's shoulders?'

Then what is more honourable, reliable and true, without having to succumb to a shaky human morality: To seek spiritual support in religion with its absolute values and recruit the help of the Church, or to rely wholly on faith in man? Is it possible that true morality might exist on a non-religious foundation?

Is it possible to be a moral person as a convinced atheist?

I can imagine how difficult it must be to the believer who has already found the truth and whose morality is sanctioned by religion, to answer this question in the affirmative. Persons of religious consciousness have a firm foundation in the absolute. Faith in man, whose militant atheism replaced the faith in God after exacting trials, has been torn to shreds. Is it then not blasphemous to equate the momentary with the eternal?

Dostoevsky's heroes, martyrs to the lack of faith, reflect on this with ultimate directness and despair. On the whole of this earth, they affirmed, 'there is no law of nature that man should love mankind, and that, if there had been any love on earth hitherto, it was not owing to a natural law, but simply because men have believed in immortality. And if you were to destroy in mankind the belief in immortality, not only love but every vital force on earth would dry up at once. There would then be nothing immoral, and everything would be permitted, even cannibalism. For every individual who does not believe in God or immortality, the moral law of nature must immediately be changed into the exact opposite of the former religious law; and egoism, even crime, must become not only lawful but be recognized as the inevitable, most rational, even honourable outcome of his position.'

After many decades of total atheistic experimentation, it is difficult to disagree with the moral maximalism of Ivan Karamazov and his apparently absurd logic. One would like to extend his idea in a direction that even he had not dreamt of. With what lust and enthusiasm did man destroy in his time his faith, how lightly he forsook it and permitted the destruction of his temples and altars. On the other hand, what spiritual firmness, what striking examples of the human spirit were exhibited by persons of non-religious background and without moral sanctions from above.

The old argument, 'what do you believe' continues. New generations of persons seeking their faith and

their God are joining in. And those who reflect seriously on the accursed questions tragically feel, because they could know it for certain personally, that the main line of division runs not between believers and non-believers, but between decent people and scoundrels who are to be found in ample measure anywhere, in all camps. The paradox of Ivan Karamazov 'without immortality there is no virtue' comes out in the absurd and never-ending 'even if there is immortality, there will never be virtue'. Thus there are no guarantees, no firm promises that mankind will correct itself and be resurrected. Nobody makes such promises and nobody can.

Let me come to my personal experience. It can be of some value only in the context of such an intimate matter as one's relation to God. During my student years I was a person of indefinite religious convictions, as currently defined. I attended a religio-philosophical circle consisting of persons of much knowledge and serious scholarship. But never before or after have I encountered so much obsession, intolerance, and high truths combined with low passions. Nobody posed the question, 'What do you believe?' One only heard 'Believe in us or get lost'. The truth that prevailed there categorically did not combine with the principle of the freedom of conscience. Perhaps it was my ill luck; but the fact that the question of the relation to God is connected with pure subjective choice, has for ages been the subject of bitter dispute, bloody conflict, and even religious wars.

The question of all questions, whether conscience, spiritual freedom, truth, and other absolute values are to be the monopoly of religion, remains open. Equally open remains the manner of having spiritual experience including that in which a man bows to the Holy Spirit without believing in the Father and the Son. Every honest spiritual search is suffused with the awareness that coercion, force and speculation are fruitless. Indeed, if there is a spiritual dimension to man, it should not be concealed and man is enlightened by its presence. Nothing else has any meaning.

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# Books

GORBACHEV IN POWER by Stephen White.

Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991.

BOTH today and in the future, people will continue to be curious about Mikhail Gorbachev—the great leader of the Soviet Union, whose reforming strategy led to its unintended collapse. While a large number of them might be satisfied by televised accounts of the Gorbachev revolution, Stephen White's book is essential reading for those interested in a narrative which deals with the political history of the period.

White sets the scene in which Gorbachev functioned by tracing succinctly the circumstances of his accession to power after the death of two CPSU general secretaries in quick succession, following Brezhnev's death in November 1982. White searches for clues which could have revealed Gorbachev's potential as a reformer. Not finding many, the author shows instead, how extensively Gorbachev relocated the leadership of the CPSU so that leaders with a 'conservative outlook' were replaced by younger and more dynamic individuals who would reflect the need for change.

Though Gorbachev's initial agenda was acceleration of economic growth, which was perceived as the 'key' to all problems, he did not restrict himself to this. He immediately went on to plan for restructuring the political system, which he felt was a necessary precursor for economic reform. White outlines Gorbachev's attempts at democratizing the political system and discusses the 1989 election to the Congress of Peoples Deputies.

Thus while a nascent civil society developed in the Soviet Union and an integrated political culture gave way to a more differentiated and plural one, White points to the central flaw of Gorbachev's political reforms, which 'certainly succeeded in dismantling a largely Stalinist inheritance, but it had not yet succeeded in replacing it with a viable combination of Leninism and democracy of central party control which yet allowed the voters to be sovereign' (p. 55). The party and socialist ideology thus continued to dominate Gorbachev's plan of action. Yeltsin, however, saw that the old relationship between party and state was not viable any longer.

White brings out the importance of Gorbachev's policy of glasnost or openness by contrasting it with earlier policies on press, censorship and public information. All information from the Soviet Union was tailored and tainted with monotony. This forced readers to read between lines or, as Y. Afansiev once

remarked, 'the whole nation followed one text book'. Glasnost in Gorbachev's time was not restricted to criticism of past leaders and policies or just reinterpretation of history. It sought to correct past statistics and assess present trends, and bring 'normalcy' into public debates and information. Though banned films and books were made available to the public, White also shows the limits of glasnost, when specific news items (e.g. the Chernobyl disaster) were tailored to some extent. It is in this context that he considers glasnost to still be a long way off from unqualified press freedom. However, White has not shown the manner in which glasnost delegitimized the Soviet system and leaders, including the initiators of glasnost itself.

White identifies a number of reasons which led to the failure of Gorbachev's economic reforms. Amongst the problems identified are: (a) the past problems of Soviet command economy and weaknesses of the agrarian sector; (b) exogenous factors like fall in value of terms of trade for USSR energy exports, disasters like Chernobyl and the Armenian earthquake; (c) gross mismanagement and inefficiency; (d) non-implementation of reforms envisaged; (e) postponement of important measures like price reforms and the continuously changing economic strategy; and (f) Gorbachev's inability to move out of the socialist system.

Though White mentions the huge Soviet military spending and the cuts made on this by Gorbachev, he takes up this important issue only in passing. This is a lacuna, specially since a number of economists have viewed the Soviet military industrial complex as a major cause of its lopsided development. Also it appears that White's analysis of the economic reforms is more organized than the reforms themselves were.

Whether he is analysing foreign policy performance or factions within the CPSU, White grips the essence of the reform process. He uncovers the uncertainties which beset Gorbachev and the impact this had on the reform process. The author also examines the nationality problem as it existed in Gorbachev's time. Like other analysis, White did not predict that the 15 Soviet Republics would fall apart in the manner they did. This however, does not detract from his work, nor can it be considered a flaw in the analysis. Events in the Soviet Union moved faster than anyone, including the Soviet leadership themselves, could determine or judge.

This book was first published in 1990, when Gorbachev was still in power. A revised version has been brought out after the Gorbachev epoch. Its import-

ance lies in the fact that Gorbachev is judged in the Soviet context and background, rather than in a position of cold war triumph. White is thus able to gauge how far it was possible for Gorbachev to go and the strains on the individual and the system which this involved. Moreover, unlike traditional Kremlinologists, White simultaneously accounts for the changes taking place in Soviet society in the socio-political sphere while detailing ideological pronouncements.

The possibility for scholars to ascertain these changes was, however, brought about by Gorbachev himself. Glasnost made it possible for scholars to study/ analyse these changes by providing access to the earlier closed society. At Gorbachev's initiative Soviet public opinion was polled for the first time. The change of discourse in Sovietology was thus initiated by him. The words of the poet Bulot Okhudzhava might well be used to sum up an individual like Gorbachev:

'When he reaches the end of his time And his soul flies into the shadows, When the field has been crossed, the deed done, You must decide what his life was. Whether bitter or sweet, whether holy Or ravaged by war, ripped in two, What was his, is now yours. All yours. Dedicated to you.

'A poet has no rivals in fate' (1988): included in *The poetry of Perestrolka*, Trans. Carol Rumens and Richard McKane.

Anuradha M. Chenoy

by Mikhail Gorbachev. Harper & Collins, London, 1991.

HOPE by Raisa Gorbachev. Translated by David Floyd. Harper & Collins, London, 1991.

WRITING accurate personal accounts or revealing evidence of private life was considered taboo for Soviet statemen. Through the Soviet regime, there was an attempt to portray public figures, as 'men (and occasionally women) of iron'. It is this iron, which Mikhail Gorbachev realized had entered their souls, that Gorbachev attempted to remove. The books under review are personal accounts by the last leader of the Soviet Union and the first lady, both of whom were dominant figures in the changing Soviet scene.

For Mikhail Gorbachev the saddest words of 'tongue or pen' are that his programme of perestroika and glasnost might have been successful but for the unsuccessful putsch which put paid to his high hopes. Ironically the coup which shattered the country was a consequence of his perestroika regime.

The August coup and its real dramatis personae are to a great extent still a mystery—the rationale behind it more so. The August Coup assumes its importance because in it, the intended 'victim' of the apocalypse records his impression for posterity. Written within a month of the aborted coup, this book of 127 pages puts the coup in perspective while detailing the alleged attempts to isolate Gorbachev and his family by holding them incommunicado in Cape Foros in the Crimea. Although it does not provide a concrete analysis of the rightist coupattempt, the book is invaluable as a straightforward account of the event, which was brought about by orthodox communists of the Stalinist hue who formed an eight-member committee headed by Vice-President Gennady Yanayev, and which also included, inter alia, V. A. Kryuchkov, head of the KGB and V. S. Pavlov, the Prime Minister.

As Gorbachev points out at the outset, the book provides the 'readers (with his) assessments of the events'. The putsch was not 'a bolt from the blue'. The nomenklatura's conservative factions, eager to retrieve the 'golden era' of the Stalinist era, were for long suspected by reformist leaders, such as Eduard Shevardnadze and Yakovlev for nurturing ulterior motives. This is acknowledged by Gorbachev. The factor which acted as a catalyst seems to have been the signing of the Union Treaty, scheduled for 20th August, perceived by the putschists as an irreversible step in the USSR's break-up. This is not to underestimate the other equally important factors, like the retreat from socialism, the attempt to usher in free market economy, the feer of the dismantling of the one-party system, etcetera.

Gorbachev lashes out at the opponents of the reform movement initiated by him. Surprisingly, he blasts the Communist Party, of which he was once the general secretary, and 'which ruled in the name of the people without obtaining the authority to do so from the people themselves'. One would be tempted to ask the question: why did he not renounce his party membership if he had reservations against the CPSU ruling Soviet Union for more than 70 years? Or why did the CPSU not split? These and many other contradictions abound in Gorbachev's era. Did he suffer from a sense of guilt? Time will tell. But for now, Gorbachev presents a picture of contradiction coupled with indecisiveness that plagued his six-and-a-half years' rule of the Soviet Union.

The questions that weighed on everyone's mind during the coup were: why was Boris Yeltsin not arrested after the coup? Why did the putschists allow foreign journalists access to communication with the outside world? While isolating Gorbachev, Yanayev and his comrades took no step to neutralize Yeltsin who became a hero from the moment he stood on top of the tank sent to overthrow him, thus playing a decisive role in preventing the return of a rightist communist dictatorship in the Soviet Union.

In the end there was enough reason to believe that the coup lacked political will-power, even though the top brass of the army, the KOB and the Communist Party were involved in the attempt to usurp power at the Kremlin. They stopped short of storming the 'Bastille', the Russian parliament, hesitating far too long and then finally shying away when it dawned on them that the consequences of such an act might prove disastrous, resulting in unprecedented civil war and a blood bath. Not only that, the putschists did not cut off telephone communications in Moscow nor did they prevent the masses from taking to the streets in different parts of the country. This facilitated easy and quick communication with foreign leaders to rally international support by Yeltsin against the coup.

Even the isolation of Gorbachev at Cape Foros seemed half-hearted, so much so that Gorbachev could record his statement on a video tape. This gave credence to the rumour of Gorbachev's complicity in the putsch. The failure of the coup was evident from the course of the events starting from 19 August, though Gorbachev would like us to believe that had 'the coup d'etat happened a year-and-a-half or two years earlier it might, presumably, have succeeded. But now society was completely changed...(the people) had become the most courageous defenders of democracy'.

In the chapter, 'The Lesson of the Coup', the author gives credit to the success of perestroika and its inevitability while analysing the reasons why the coup did not succeed. Reflection on the various shortcomings of the political machinery are enlightening, coming as they do from the former President of the Soviet Union. In hindsight, the failure of Gorbachev to grasp the pre-coup disorder of the political machinery cannot be overlooked. After all, the Vice-President, the Prime Minister, the KGB Chief et al were all his men. If they proved treacherous, it only reflects poorly on the political sagacity and statesmanship of the President.

Gorbachev has to acknowledge this. In this connection, 'The Crimea Article', 'written a few days before the coup', which has been rightly placed in an appendix to the book, assumes importance as it carefully analyses the ills of the erstwhle country. But, unfortunately, it seems that the President took no steps to cure them. While he attempted to assuage the feelings of the reformers, he took no initiative to check the activities of the Stalinist camp. He certainly fell short of the will power that was required of him.

'Perestroika could not be carried through in an international vacuum, especially not in a hostile environment,' he rightly opined. But he could not successfully carry the masses and his comrades to the Garden of Eden that perestroika and glasnost promised. Instead, he led the country to the brink of an abyss. The signs of disintegration, which had become quite obvious even before the August coup, remained a challenge which he could not avert. The nationalities crisis eluded his solutions.

No wonder Gennady Yanayev noted at the famous press conference following the emergency declaration on 19 August: 'A real threat of disintegration has arisen, the break-up of a single economic space, a single space of civil rights, a single defence, and a single foreign policy. In many regions of the USSR, as a result of multinational, inter-ethnic clashes, there is bloodshed, and the break-up of the USSR would entail the most serious internal and international consequences. Under these circumstances we have no other choice but to take decisive measures in order to stop the slide of the country towards catastrophe.'

We are perhaps too close to the military/party junta's attempt to usurp power to pass a final verdict. Revelations regarding the plot will take some time to come to light. The real brains behind the scenes are still to be uncovered. And while it is true that there may have been more to the coup than meets the eye, for the moment at least the attempt appears as ludicrous as the condition of Yanayev was when he was arrested on 2! August. Not surprisingly it has been said that 'seventy-three years of Soviet power and we cannot even produce a decent coup leader let alone execute an efficient coup. It was a very Soviet-style job'.

The attempt by the author to recount the details of the coup is laudable. But much needs to said and done by Gorbachev to counter the various rumours regarding the coup. Perhaps now that he is out of office and employment, he can sit and analyse the events leading to the coup in a better perspective than this book has to offer.

In the book I Hope, Raisa Gorbachev tells her tale to writer George Pryakhin. The 'live conversation', as Raisa Gorbachev puts it in her introduction to the 'foreign reader' (as if the people of the erstwhile Soviet Union knew so much about their former first lady) enlightens us about her background—the trauma and travails of the family whose paterfamilias was a 'railwayman' shuttling from one 'nest' to another, the 'joy and pride' of going to study in Moscow State University, her courtship and marriage, her life as the first lady of the erstwhile USSR, her hopes for the future of the country that was!

The book is the offspring of six meetings with George Pyrakhin, spread over four months (between December 1990 to April 1991). Its aim, as Raisa Gorbachev emphasizes, is 'to explain certain things and to put to rest certain misunderstandings...to share my problems, my anxieties and my hopes'. The hopes, albeit pious and emotional, dash against the wall of realpolitik and are lost in the myriad problems that compounded the Soviet Union's anxieties until it ceased to exist as a nation.

Her hopes, however, aptly reflect the minds of millions of her countrymen who were swept into the new era ushered in by the Bolshevik Revolution which promised carrots but preferred to give sticks instead. 'In chapter six, Raisa attempts to spell out her political perceptions which are charged with emotional sentimentality. She states that perestroika transformed the Soviet Union while attempting to provide socialism with a human face. 'Perestroika,' she claims, 'is not a barren fig tree: there is fruit on it.' But unfortunately the fruit soured even before it could ripen, partly because the perestroika regime after the first two years of creative initiative, went under, destroyed by the tentativeness and melodramatic euphemisms that characterised it. Floodgates were opened thoughtlessly, deluging the country with unprecedented emotions intermingled with pent up anger and frustrations.

Raisa Gorbachev skirts the entire spectrum of perestroika with a heaven on earth expectation, as also a sense of optimistic enthusiasm, convinced as she is that its results would make 'everybody...feel... that they are inwardly more at peace with themselves...' She was naive enough to believe that the Midas touch of Gorbachev and his perestroika would transform all the ills of Soviet Union. The most revealing part of the book is Raisa Gorbachev's candid admission of Mikhail Gorbachev's now famous statement: 'We just cannot go on like this,' which he first uttered on the day Chermenko died and there were indications that Gorbachev may take over as the General Secretary of the CPSU.

The chapters on Raisa's childhood are interesting for their detail and point to the poverty-stricken conditions in the Russia of those days. It was thus poverty that probably prompted the poet Taras Shenechenko to write the lines which Raisa Gorbachev frequently read out to her father: 'My thoughts, my thoughts, what pain you bring! Why do you rise up at me in such gloomy rows?...' The kaleidoscopic details of the university days, Mikhail Gorbachev's dating his future wife, their subsequent marriage in 1953 and the trials and tribulations they went through are lucidly described.

While singing paeans in praise of her husband, whom she describes as, 'manly and steadfast, strong and kind', throughout the book she does not miss any opportunity to go off into self-laudatory monologues. She is at her best while describing her sojourns abroad as the first lady, taking pride in the fact that she broke with her country's tradition whereby wives of leaders never took part in public functions or even informal occasions. This, she asserts, is 'just another sign of the "liberalisation" introduced by perestroika....'

Interspersed as it is with George Pryakhin's flattering monologues, this 'book of straight speaking' is highly unorganized, scratching the surface of several subjects without any attempt to penetrate deeper. Short on intellectual stimulation, the book serves no academic interest save for some passing remarks here and there, which a researcher delving into the Gorbachev period might find interestingl

Soumen Dhar Choudhury

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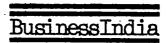
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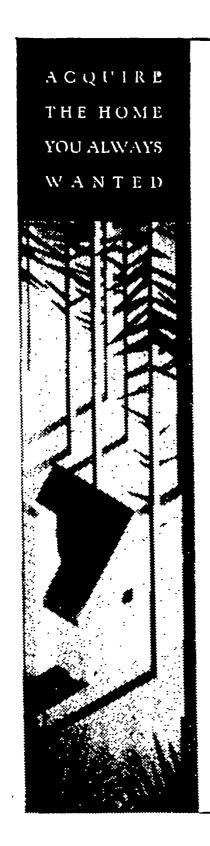
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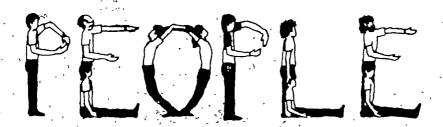
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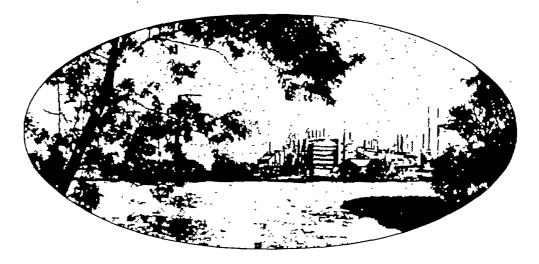
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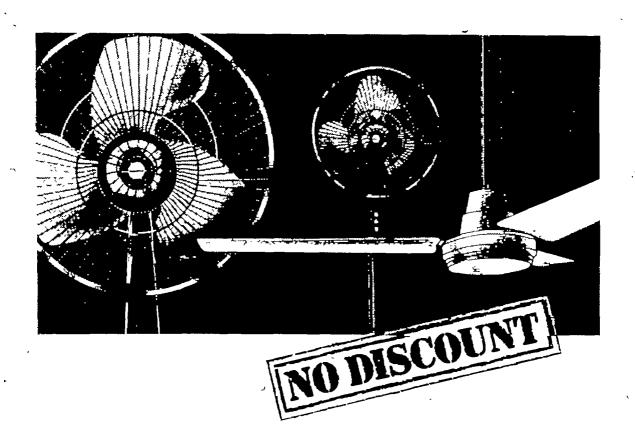
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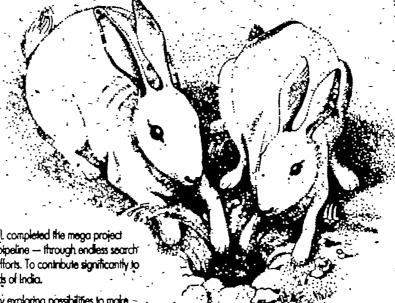
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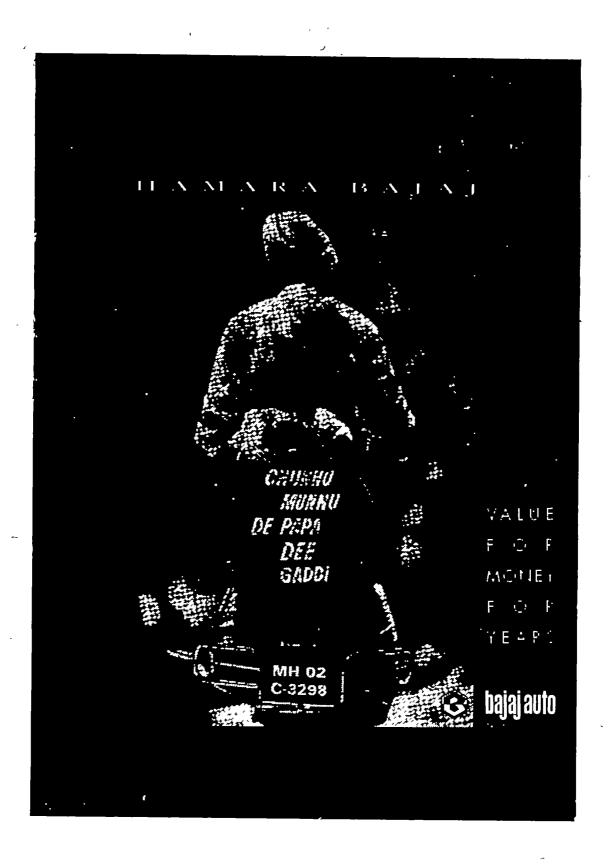
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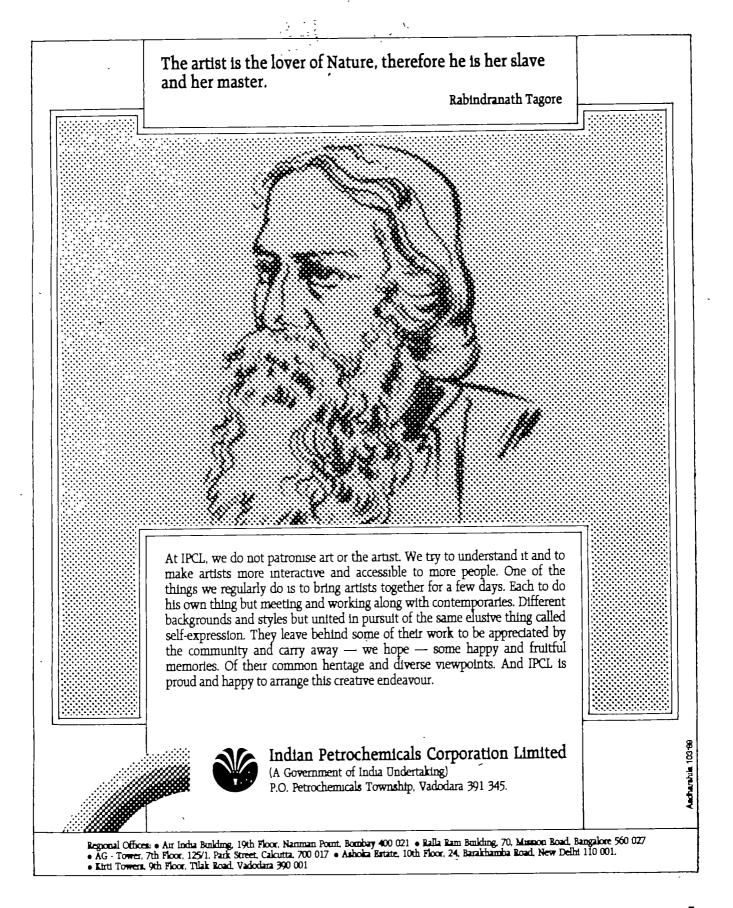
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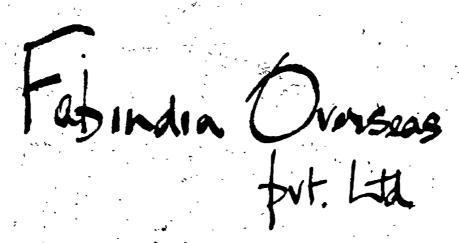


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JEXT MONTH: NEGLECTED SECTOR

### DIALOGUE

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COVER
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# The problem

OUR childhood in the fifties was something beautiful. It was a period of innocence where every child was proud to be an Indian. There was something secure about a world where Gandhi was in heaven and Nehru in command. Every citizen was a craftsman, every child an apprentice in the most exciting craft of all, the process of nation-building.

There was a clarity to our civics and everyone around us valued science, secularism, nationalism, socialism. It was a period of great experiments called Non-Alignment, Mixed Economy and Import Substitution—crystalline words which look muddled now. At one level it was a world without shadows. We felt that the idea of the third world was invented for us to lead. We were both modern and uniquely civilizational. We had a copyright on both the past and the future. But what we were proudest of was our democracy, which we repeatedly said was the largest in the world. We knew then that it was both a largeness of numbers and of heart.

India was a livable world, India, industrial India, was both cosy nest and future nest-egg. We were simultaneously profound, naive, innocent and sophisticated. It was a world where Gandhi and Nehru

were heroes, and Raj Kapoor and R.K. Narayan the story-tellers. Life was part Glimpses of World History, part Swami and His Friends and was peopled by C.V. Raman, Mushtaq Ali, Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan and Dhyan Chand.

As our republic grew towards what Americans called adolescence, strange things happened. India lost a war to China and in our minds it was as bad as when India lost in hockey to Pakistan. Defeat had made the world a dismally serious place. Over the next two decades came a cascade of events-Naxalbari, gheraos, Emergency, communal riots, Bangla Desh, police encounters—and the world we knew started disappearing by the eighties. Statesmen gave way to politicians and our narratives changed from story-telling to social science. But despite riots, despite famines and the Emergency, we somehow clung to the one myth, the one assumption that none of us would give up: our self-image as a democracy. But we soon realized that it was a world different from that of our children.

We remember the first time we told our eldest daughter the story of Gandhi and the education inspector who asked him to spell kettle. We were

touched by the story and Gandhiji's honesty in not cheating. When we told her the story she looked blankly and then said, 'It is okay papa, I know how to spell kettle.' The magic of Gandhi seemed distant. We were happy that we still shared some of the same people. She loves Raj Kapoor and thinks Mera Joota hai Japani is shades better as an anthem than Tagore's song. She still stands starched and proud when the jana gana mana is played. She asks us difficult questions. The other day she said: 'If the Mandal report is for poor people, why are you against it? She looks upset when children burn themselves and couldn't sleep the day saffron flagged men screamed late at night near our house. Nearby there is a colony where there is a children's Shiv Sena and it intrigues her.

The most adventurous boy in her class is a Sikh called Angad. He climbs walls effortlessly. Our daughter asks: if Angad is a Sikh, how can Sikhs be terrorists? She is puzzled by Red Alerts and the new Frankenstein called LTTE. Hers is still the innocence of childhood. She is Syrian Christian and Hindu, Tamil and Malayali and, depending on which grandmother she is with, vegetarian and non-vegetarian. The other day she announced gleefully that

she was going to be a Muslim. She insisted on lighting diyas for Guru Nanak's birthday and wondered why only a few others did.

Yet the world she has inherited is different: different in quality of violence, different in the sanctity given to certain words. One can't brush it away with an Alice-in-Wonderland certainty and say, 'I use words to mean what I say.' The words we valued in our time have become rusty and pompous. Sometimes they have become antonyms of their original meanings. Like pedantic parents we make a list of such key words. The magical words of our childhood were nation, science, secularism, development, reason, progress. Yet all these words have lost their fire. If democracy is to be sustained we must revitalize the dialogue around these words. The older notion of democracy which relied on this thesaurus of words won't do. They need to be defined and redefined through continuous conversation.

Consider the fate of only one word, nation. It involved freedom and liberation of communities finding an identity beyond their differences. Nationalists like Gandhi, Nehru, Azad, Patel, C.R. Das, Lajpat Rai, Subramanya Bharati were household

names. In a nationalist movement, or so we thought, the suppressed voice of millions came alive and the leaders articulated the voice of these communities. National movements had shades of the carnivalesque; they overturned authority, and ridiculed those who imitated the colonialists.

But as the nation became the nation-state, something got bureaucratized. What was a vision, a living language, froze into a dead grammar. What was a mosaic, collage, a celebration, a conversation, became a dull boarding school where the state, like a stern principal, ordained what was to be nationalist. Those who dissented instead of being celebrated, became anti-nationalist. So Jaya Prakash Narayan was anti-national. Anyone who talked of police atrocities or campaigned against dams or nuclear energy was anti-national. If the nation was open and polyphonic, the nation-state was a strait-jacket.

The corset tightened as the nation-state became a national security state. Unity became uniformity and the celebration that was India became a dull regime. The old words swadeshi and swaraj were forgotten. The nation was no longer a cultural identity; it became a military one, suppressing differences beyond and within itself. As a result, the nation as a rubric of multiple identities was truncated. Once you could affably be Bengali or Tamil and nationalist. When Satyajit Ray described himself primarily as Bengali, no one became hysterical. Identity was a nested series which spiralled out.

But today identity is becoming aridly singular. You can be Indian in a narrow sense or you become that hyphenated bastardized Hindu-nationalist or Bengali-nationalist. Such a branding destroys the niches which the older concept of nation gave to other identities. It was an identity of a different sort. To put it simplistically, earlier one rarely said 'Hindu' or 'Indian'. One claimed to be a Vadama or a Tamil without denying the great whole of which one was a part. As a result the larger identity was never reduced to a single integer. Secondly, what was a comfortable separateness never became separatism. N. Laldenga could be a rebel and yet graduate to be a chief minister. Now, the Sikh who was proud of being Sikh and Indian is punished for being both. As a result nationalist power and ethnic violence meet in a mutuality of terror and terror is the end of dialogue.

The nation-state, instead of being a site for multiple identities, has become a binary entity built on the either/or of Sikh or Indian, Muslim or Indian, disorder or order. Earlier nations had frontiers where identities merged, where lines were porous. Today nation-states have boundaries, reified lines which get drawn across real communities. And then the violence that begins as an act of boundary maintenance moves to the centre. The Naga we killed in the fifties yielded, or was rather joined by the Sikh we killed in Delhi in the eighties. The nation which began as an act of liberation has turned genocidal

of its own members. The possibilities of democracy declined as terror and body counts became the language of security as technocratic machismo.

In its career of four decades from nation to national security-state, the possibility of dialogue within the essential framework of democracy was dying. This issue of SEMINAR is a search for the possibilities of dialogue. We wish to emphasize that dialogue is inseparable with democracy and dialogue is the only way through which the worlds, the keywords proclaim can be kept alive. The search for dialogue is not a search for similarity: it is a search where differences are celebrated. In this both syncretism and the old unity in diversity model are inadequate. What we are struggling with is pluralism. Unlike the earlier theories of order, which sought unity through a melting pot or assimilative models, or through a search- for the similarities that unite. plurality begins as a dialogue and celebration of difference. Difference is not something one melts down, imprisons, schools, or puts in a reservation. Difference is the basis of dialogue.

We have got to begin by questioning the basic secularist self within us. We have to ask whether the story we have recounted is an insulated or parochial one, a fairy-tale world made of rationalist biscuit bricks and the chocolate icing of secularism. Did secularism as a form of hygiene create an arid and formal world that suppressed or repressed the ethnic and the religious? Why did we feel that modernity was essential for religious pluralism in India? Did the secularism/communalism dichotomy, which the modern nation-state imposed, damage a society which had a richer understanding of religious difference? If so, how were local and traditional interpretations of the relation between politics and religion different from the modern Western interpretation of this relationship? What are the other metaphors of relating part to whole and part to part in India? Do we need to be caught in the usual divide of secularism/communalism, tradition/modernity, nationalism/ethnicity, capitalism/socialism or can we look for a more polyphonic and many-shaded view of our universe?

What then are the frames for such a dialogic activity? The theologian Raimando Panikkar offers one such beginning. Western history, he claims, reflects a particular dilemma of the relation between religion and politics, reflecting in turn the particular problems of a kind of dualism. The relationship is always conceived in terms of institutions; of church and state. Holy See and Empire, religious marriage and civil marriage, church school and state school. The language of discourse itself is always dualistic. It pits professional clergy against laity, religious against civil, secular against sacred. It is these dichotomies which Panikkar wishes to challenge.

Panikkar posits a threefold view of the relationship between religion and politics. As an exercise in heuristics, he distinguishes between heteronomy, ontonomy and antonomy. Autonomy implies that the world of religion and politics are separate and a third term such as reason or custom is necessary to bring the two into relationship. The church is separate from the state, each has its own rules and no interference is acceptable. A heteronomic view implies a hierarchical structure of reality. One sphere is thus regarded as superior and regulative of other spheres. It results in either Cesaropapism or Therocracy, that is politics dominates religion or religion dominates politics. Khomeini's Iran or Stalin's Russia are illustrations of this trend.

The third relationship in Panikkar's arcane language is ontonomous. 'It is one of constitutive interdependence regulated by the very nature of both religion and politics as being two elements of one and the same reality.' Panikkar insists that the ontonomic attitude is not a mediocre middle way but an original position. 'The sacred and profane are two aspects of one and the same thing and either is incomplete or even wrong the moment it wishes to have a separate and independent sphere of its own.' Within such a perspective 'Galileo's famous remark that the church tells us how to go to heaven and science tell us how heaven goes is no longer tenable. The path to heaven is not divorced from the heavenly path.'

What Panikkar is also criticizing is the identification of religion with the church and politics with the state. Both have to do with man, a political animal whose politics cannot ignore the nature of man as a religious animal. Within such a perspective, what are the possibilities of such an ontonomic world? Who were the great practitioners of dialogue between science and religion, between religions, between medical systems based on different religions? Can we extend such a dialogic conception to the worlds of feminism, Marxism or even modern economics? Such a project can break down into the following list of questions:

What is the human history of such key words as secularism, fundamentalism, communalism or even such categories as nation-state, science and progress? What dialogic possibilities do they point to or repress? What does a conversation or an act of translation mean? Who were the great practitioners of dialogue? What can we learn from the lives of Gandhi, Iqbal, Abhishaktananda or Martin Buber?

But dialogue is not just the character of individuals. How does it get institutionalized in our society? What kind of a dialogue, concrete and practical, has Indian culture showed evidence of? How can these principles be applied by contemporary activists, theologians or even ordinary citizens in everyday life or in confronting such issues as Ram Janmabhumi and Babri Masjid? Does popular culture as reflected in film or literature or everyday religious discourse reflect such a dialogical world? How does it knit similarity and separateness? How dialogic has contemporary Hinduism been? Is Ashok Singhal, the VHP leader, merely a threat to secularism or to Hinduism also? Have Hindu moves to-

wards reform been merely Semitic in character, as for example in the life of Dayanand and Ramakrishna? The Western sociology of sects portrays it as tight-knit and exclusive. Indian anthropologists like Veena Das have shown that sects can be voluntary and fluid. Can we see sects as a dialogic possibility within Indian life?

For the secularist the Indian Constitution is a sacred charter. How dialogic was the Constituent Assembly in mediating between the secular and the sacred, nationalism and the ethnicities? Is the universe of civil law a secular pomposity or is it genuinely liberating? How dialogic has been the Indian legal system to various minorities? But is the language of majorities and minorities itself an arid framework to look at Indian society? Does it convert everything to a numbers game and communities to mere vote banks?

The city has been a scene of communal riots. One thinks of Ahmedabad or Aligarh or Jamshedpur in this context. What is frightening is that cities which have no history of communal riots have suddenly turned communal. What are the dynamics behind such a process? How can politics turn the city into a more dialogic landscape, keeping in mind both Jaipur of 1990 and Delhi of 1984?

Certain religions have been treated as extraneous to India or as marginal to its essence. Such an attitude extends both to tribal religions and even to Indian Christianity, which is older than its Western variant. What kinds of conversations have existed between tribal religions and Christianity, between Hinduism and Christianity beyond the usual conspiracy theories of missionizing colonialism? Why is it that the new encounter between Christianity and Hinduism lacks the creative spark that Gandhi, Andrews and Swami Abhishaktananda brought to it?

However dialogue is not merely a dialogue of religions alone. It can be between religion and science, religion and Marxism. In this context, can we think of ecology as a potential dialogue between science and religion? What are the dialogic possibilities of Marxism? This is a point that is important to emphasize when in an age of perestroika many people forget its poetic possibilities. Can we think of an Indian Marxism? Who are its exemplars? Will Liberation Theology be ironically the last repository of Marxist thought? Does the CPM's interest in the Bhakti movement contain possibilities?

Modern feminism too has operated on the grid of inclusion and exclusion. How can feminism move from a language of equality and uniformity to one of fraternity and difference? In this context—how do we create a microsociology of the acts of conversation and translation? This poser, both as biography and a list of questions, is merely an invitation to such a conversation.

# Worm in the apple

RAVINDRA K. JAIN

ONE can view dialogue from a number of different perspectives: the simplest is a dialogue between individuals—a conversational setting. Then there is the dialogue between the self and the other—a kind of psychoanalytical and philosophical reading of this process. The dialogue between cultures has been the stock-in-trade of anthropology and this meaning gains special piquancy historically because of the contrasting scenarios - colonial and post-colonial, modern and postmodern—that we live through. Epistemologically, the juncture at which we stand today necessitates that to understand our current predicament we adopt a dual focus: that of culture and of political economy, without reducing the one to the other.

This is patently going beyond the conventional perspectives of Marxism and structuralism. At a more concrete level, isn't this the major thrust of those of us who see the process of creative intervention in the affairs of the day as liberation beyond the fetters of bureaucratic regimentation, as the quest for cognizing the ironies of the present existence without doing away with compassion, as an impassioned striving towards patriotism minus the stultifying constraints of rapid nationalism and statism? And, of course, above and beyond the terrifying rhetoric of the 'mothers' (and fathers) of all wars in the Gulf or of resurgent Nazism in Germany, we have no other option but to converse across the table, to engage in dialogue.

While it is true that discourse and dialogue overlap, there is nevertheless, a thin, but significant line that divides them. Discourse is constituted by the construction and/or deconstruction of the text or texts. Just as in the construction of a text so also in its reading, there is a strong element of authorship, i.e., of ideology at several removes from the popular and the everyday, to speak nothing of the streamlining of polyvalent interpretations. Dialogue is much more spontaneous and multi-dimensional, and communication in it is assured though it may be ephemeral.

Discourse-oriented interpretations of dialogue and communicationoriented ones present contrasting pictures—in the former case limits and breakdowns are easily posited whereas in the latter rendering there is a constant interflow of what Bakhtin has called the 'dialogical imagination'. Let me give an illustration. Recently there has been quite a bit of writing on post-colonial literatures (cf. Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1989). Some authors operate with a centre-periphery model of political economy, transposing it in the sphere of language and literature. It has been argued that the English of metropolitan Britain is in the periphery replaced by variegated English. And that the two discourses do not constitute a dialogue; there is a breakdown in communication, if not actual antagonism.

Contrast this with the picture of post-colonial English in India—language in dialogue—presented by the

cartoonist Laxman. He depicts a desi leader in kurta-pyjama having just finished addressing an anti-English convention in English! And on being asked why, he exclaims, 'Did I speak in English? Oh! I forgot.' Here, then, you have the presence of amnesia, of absence, of negation in dialogue which, shall we say, might escape the net of 'discourse'. And this is what makes dialogue memorable—it may be ephemeral, but it is also memorable, like a myth.

What about the overlap between discourse and dialogue? It should be mentioned that the messages being exchanged between parties to a dialogue may not be received in exactly the same way as they are transmitted. In other words, what we have been saying about the freedom from constructed ideology in dialogue as contrasted with discourse is not as real as it appears. One can cite numerous instances where the signals transmitted in one way were received in an entirely different, culturally-bound ways, thereby leading to a disjunction in dialogue.

Further, in a dialogic approach it may not be very useful to conceive of 'culture' as something out there to be discovered, described and explained. Rather, it should be viewed as something into which the ethnographer, as interpreter, entered. It is this dialogic aspect of culture, culture not as a given but as something made or, rather, co-created by anthropologist and informant in a 'conversation' which needs to be emphasized. In contrast to a textual construction, the anthropologist's conversation generates, exchanges and transforms not only words but the world of non-verbal signs as well, not only symbols—those arbitrary or conventional signs—but also icons and indexes and a whole array of other, more or less motivated, signs.

Often enough the writer of a text fails to do what lies at the heart of a dialogue—taking turns in a conversation. An example that comes to mind of this hiatus is the Indian reportage of V.S. Naipaul. (It is significant that he has not engaged in the dialogical genre of the novel in an Indian setting.) In his

An Area of Darkness and India: A Wounded Civilisation it is the author, V.S. Naipaul, who does all the speaking. He unwinds himself—at length. Twenty-eight years later we have his India: A Million Mutinies Now, and lo and behold! here Naipaul is letting his subjects unburden themselves—the book is almost like a collage of transcribed tapes. Interestingly, this too is a monologue, only this time around on the part of the subjects.

L he interaction between cultures in anthropology during much of the colonial period has been marked by an absence of vocalization of the dialogue. The anthropologist has visited, operated upon and articulated the cultures of the 'natives' for a coterie consisting of the anthropological fraternity and an elite readership in the metropolis and perhaps some in the peripheries. The quest of the anthropologist-authors was, at the most, to see themselves as representatives of their own cultures to be reflected in a mirror provided by the 'other' culture. All the while, they were single-minded in the pursuit of a gain' for their own cultures, both in cognition and empathy. Dialogue, such as the one that existed in these circumstances, was in the nature of private jokes between the anthropologist-authors and their elite readership. The savage did not hit back, indeed, there was no possibility for him to even mutter back.

In post-colonial times the situation has changed: anthropologists have become much more self-conscious and critical of themselves while their reading public now includes a considerably larger proportion of 'natives'. The transition may be defined as one where for the anthropologist it is not only a dialogue between the self and the other but with the self as the other. Viewed at the unicultural plane of Western civilization alone, this development has been perceived by psychoanalysts like Lacan and Laing as the problem of the 'divided self'.

In anthropological practice this has led to experimental studies where not only the substance but the stylistics, not only the thought patterns but also the sense-perceptions of the so-called 'other' cultures

are being written or redacted into the anthropological text (cf. Marcus and Fischer, 1986). The crisis of representation that is entailed in the construction of the anthropological text is in some instances being met face-to-face by resort to surrealism, quite akin to the modernist exchange of the artist-viewer sensibility in post-impressionist art. A good example is the surrealist ethnography of Michael Taussig in Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man.

In extreme cases of anthropological writing the terms of the dialogue between the self and the other are being reversed. Michael Taussig's book illustrates this trend neatly. The basic question with regard to the colonizing whites and the colonized natives is who carried whom on his back? The myth of the White Man's Burden had unequivocally held that it was the former who carried the weight of the latter. As a radical inversion of that paradigm Taussig writes and illustrates (by photographs) how it was the native who carried the colonizer on his back in Colombia throughout the colonial period! The physicality of the latter image also marks the transition in modern and post-modernist ethnography from arbitrary symbol to the invariant icon.

Dialogue in the anthropological practice of fieldwork is again signalled by those experimentalists like Mette Bovin, who have sounded a call for 'provocation anthropology' (Bovin, 1988). Bovin is unhappy with the fact that traditionally anthropologists have been going to the natives, speaking their language and even dressing and behaving like them in order to get for themselves information about these 'others'. Instead of this unilateral 'getting' an appropriation—can't we have barter, a give and take of cultures? Thus she went to the Fulbe and Hausa of Burkina Faso in Western Africa with a troupe of Danish (her own culture's) stage artistes and performed among these African Muslims plays from her own culture. The kind of mutual questioning and real dialogue which the interpreta-tion of these 'native' performances among the 'hosts' caused does constitute a novelty in the fieldwork practice of anthropologists.

(Daniel, 1991). We may think that the essentialism of the culture-concept is checked when we view culture not as a given but as emergent, not as reality but realizing, not as essentially relative but as relatively (and dynamically) essential. Dialogue too, especially across cultures, can be viewed in these dynamic terms.

But, as Daniel says, 'there is a worm in the apple, a bomb in the banana' (ibid., p. 6); for one is forced to ask the question whether there isn't a counterpoint to culture and, by extension, to dialogue? Have we not been inheritors to an aesthetic presumption about the nature

It should be noted, however, that

the implicit assumption that dialogue is always good, desirable, and 'liberating' cannot be sustained, for

in making such an assumption we

are in danger of 'essentializing'.

Here there is a parallel with what E.

Valentine Daniel says about culture

ced to ask the question whether there isn't a counterpoint to culture and, by extension, to dialogue? Have we not been inheritors to an aesthetic presumption about the nature of culture-if not 'sweetness and light', then at least 'a complex whole' -positing a teleology to the cultural process which ends up in harmony, not unlike the Kantian object of beauty? Is this teleology sustainable, as much for dialogue as for culture? Daniel's anthropology of violence, illustrated by the ethnography of terror in the ethnic strife of Sri Lanka, is enough to pass seismic tremors throughout the edifice of an aesthetic teleology of culture. And the emergent dialogue about religion, politics and nation in India represents the reverberations of a similar tectonic movement, largely of symbolic violence.

L he notion of symbolic violence is treated with particular insight by Pierre Bourdieu. It is applicable to the realm of dialogue inasmuch as all acts of communication exchanges of gifts, challenges, or words always bear within them a potential conflict, it is because they always contain the possibility of domination. 'Symbolic Violence is that form of domination which, transcending the opposition usually drawn between sense relations and power relations, communication and domination, is only exerted through the communication in which it is disguised' (Bourdieu, 1977: 237).

Taking the cue from Bourdieu, what I wish to point out is the

particular manner in which Hindu religious fundamentalism is misrecognized today as a form of nationalism. The question I am basically trying to answer is the one posed by Gyanendra Pandey in two of his recent articles (Pandey, 1991 [a] & [b]), namely, the nature of the dialectic between, on the one hand, the textualist-ideological discourse of Hindutva supporters such as Savarkar and Golwalkar and, on the other hand, its immense popular appeal among the masses, viz., the verbal-subaltern-leaflet type of propaganda which has been shrilly articulated in the environs of Ayodhya, the site of the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid strife. To be more precise, we have here the translation and transformation of a mythological, epic and civilizational tradition into a rabid fundamentalist movement complete with a shrill rhetoric and a political party.

Oo far all that we analysts have been able to do is to highlight the mechanics of this interface, its media, whether television serials. ratha yatra, ekta yatra, the saffron brigade, or the oratorial men and women. However, the semantics which lie at the heart of this dialectic may be decoded as symbolic violence or the euphemization of relations of domination. Pandey comes close to recognizing this when he says: '...nationalist discourse, and with it what is called communal discourse in India, is always political however much it pretends to speak in the "non-political" language of religion and community' (ibid., p. 3008). Looking at the evidence from the grassroots level, Pandey speaks of propaganda and strife as having 'fed one another and led on to far more vicious and generalized forms of violence, and far more vicious and generalized constructions of Self and Other, than were known before'.

In other words, we are led again to the problematic of dialogue and, especially, to recognizing that there is a counterpoint to dialogue in exactly the same sense as Daniel speaks of a counterpoint to culture. Of this counterpoint to culture, Daniel says, 'In this darkness and this silence, there is neither ontology

nor epistemology, hermeneutics nor semiotics, materialism nor idealism, and most importantly, neither Culture nor culture ... The counterpoint of which I have spoken today is one that resists all evolutionary streams, be they of action or of thought. It will and should remain outside of all (C/c)ulture, if for no other reasons than to remind us that (a) as scholars, intellectuals and interpreters we need to be humble in the face of its magnitude, and (b) as human beings we need to summon all the vigilance at our command so as to never stray towards it and be swallowed by its vortex into its unaccountable abyss' (*ibid.*, p. 16).

Lo briefly recapitulate, dialogue is, can be and should be 'liberating', positive and beautiful. That it may become, and has become, explosive and inimical to humanity should be recognized and countered. In the world we live in, there is not only overt violence, which is crushing and blinding, but also the more insidious symbolic violence. The two forms of violence are like the Siamese twins; the one feeds on the other. The emergent dialogue of symbolic violence in our country merits as strong an indictment as Daniel provides for the counterpoint to culture. It is a question of now or never.

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# Inter-faith dialogue for humanization

M. M. THOMAS

INSTEAD of inter-'religious' dialogue, I have spoken of inter-'faith' dialogue in the title of this article. I have done so to make the point that even secular ideologies, when pursued as a total way of life and sole path to truth, acquire a 'faith' dimension. As Paul Tillich used to say, faith denotes any ultimate concern and commitment of human beings. The human search for structures of meaning and/or sacredness within which to visualize the ultimate human destiny and to strive for the historical human future in the light of that vision is the substance of faith and spirituality.

I would also emphasize the second part of the title of this essay. Any dialogue, whether between religion and secular ideology, or among the religions themselves, to be creative and fruitful, must be set within the central problematic of modern human existence and aim at meeting the challenge of the historical future which all humanity faces today: namely, the humanization of the modern technological culture in which we find ourselves.

Ever since the Renaissance of the 16th century and the Enlightenment of the 17th and 18th produced in Europe the belief that scientific and technical rationality is the chief path towards knowledge of reality and human progress, the application of scientific rationalism and technical rationality to life have been the main constituents of the process of modernization, which has become a universal movement transforming the whole world.

No doubt, the process has revolutionized agriculture and industry and increased economic productivity thus transferring poverty from the realm of fate to the realm of moral freedom. It has transformed transport and communication systems so as to justify the term 'global village'

for the whole world. It has controlled death and disease and opened the way for controlling births and population, thereby enhancing the quality of life. It has expanded human freedom defined as creative mastery over natural forces, to include self-determination of individual persons and as enabling the awakening of the traditionally submerged groups to demand egalitarian justice in social history. It has desacralized society and state, making it possible to build communities across religious communalities. All these are positive gains.

But as we come to the end of the 20th century, we become conscious of the inhumanities which technical rationality and technological advance have produced. The promise that technological development would eliminate mass poverty from the third world has been betrayed. In India, 40 to 50% live below the poverty line. Advance in military technology coupled with the idea of the sovereignty of nation-states have made wars highly destructive and the peace maintained by the industrial-military complex highly oppressive. Unlimited technological development stimulated by human greed has destroyed the organic ties and structures of family, tribe and village which, in traditional societies, provided the basis of face-to-face human community relations. It has also brought about urban settlements in which society has been atomized and people depersonalized and turned into mass.

Technological culture has made the function of the state co-extensive with society, with bureaucratic planning tending to invade all realms of life. And even struggles for justice have become a matter of revolutionary technology, of social engineering in which people are treated not as subjects of their future but as objects of mass manipulation,

which turns revolutions for justice into a new oppression. State totalitarianism of Hitler and Stalin were made possible by comprehensive technical planning.

More than all this, unlimited development of technology is today being seen as destroying the ecological basis of life itself. Ideologists of secular humanism, which was in large measure responsible for producing modern society and technological culture, are themselves feeling that their failure to fulfil the promise of overall human development and the emergence of forces threatening not only humanity but all life, are probably due to the fact that they did not reckon with the organic and the spiritual dimensions of human selfhood in their philosophy of modernization.

This awareness is abundantly present among the leaders of secular ideological movements in India. Thanks to their revolt against Stalinism and to the impact of Gandhian philosophy on their life and thought, not only Jawaharlal Nehru but also Jayaprakash Narayan, Lohia, Ambedkar etcetera saw the need to redefine scientific rationality and revolutionary technology within a larger framework of humanism, which recognized transcendental moral and spiritual realities.

Nehru was devoted to science, but he said, 'When science had the whole world in its grasp to mould, there was some essential hitch, some vital elements missing; there was no knowledge of ultimate purposes, not even an understanding of the immediate purpose, for science had told us nothing about any purpose in life.' Man could control nature, but he did not have 'the power to control himself'; and as a result, 'the monster he had created ran amok'! So, he says, some explicit faith in 'things of the spirit' is necessary to give anchorage, objective or purpose to life (Dorothy Norman, Vol II).

When Jayaprakash discovered that by reducing consciousness to a behaviour of matter, the philosophy of materialism 'knocks the bottom out of ethics', and that science is 'necessarily amoral', he moved to non-materialism. 'The root of mora-

lity lies in the endeavour of man to realize the unity of existence or, to put it differently, to realize the self' (Bimla Prasad).

And Ram Manohar Lohia asked for a 'new integration' between spirituality and materiality in the interpretation of the realities of time and society. 'The method of dialectical materialism informed by spirituality may unravel the moment of history. The method of spirituality informed by dialectical, materialism may raise the edifice of living' (R. Lohia: Marx, Gandhi and Socialism). According to Ambedkar, a religion which did not contradict science, recognized the moral code of liberty, equality and fraternity, and did not sanctify poverty, was essential to life and the practice of a just society.

On the other side, Indian religions through the impact of scientific rationalism and social modernization and through inner dialogue with the spirit of modernity, have become aware of the earthly and historical responsibilities through which the human self has to prepare for and anticipate its eternal destiny. They have gradually assimilated the historical becoming of man and the values of secular humanism within the framework of their theological anthropology.

In many ways one may interpret the neo-Hindu reform movements of the 19th and 20th centuries, from those led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda and Dayananda Saraswathi to those of Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi, as the struggle of Hinduism to build up a religious humanism which could provide the foundation for redefining and promoting modernity as the means to develop a spiritually human community. Of course, Western Christianity, which established educational institutions in India as instruments for promoting secular science and the Christian gospel, had already grappled theologically with the problem of scientific and technical rationality and had built up a sort of syncretic compromise between religion and modernization in its own characteristic way. This contributed a great deal to the neo-Hindu movements.

Indian Islam was slower than Hinduism to respond to modern impact and reform itself from within. But it, too, produced movements in line with Islamic modernism led by Mohammed Abduh—'the father of 20th century thought in the Arab world'-and Rashida Rida of Lebanon. In India, Mohammad Iqbal, for instance, justified the religious reconstruction of Islam within the context of the dynamics of modern culture, on the grounds that 'European culture on its intellectual side is only a further development of some of the most important phases of the culture of Islam', a fact which opened the possibility for Islam to 'reach the true inwardness of that culture' on its own fundamentals (Mohammad Iqbal: Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, Lahore, 1954).

L he point I am stressing is that it is in the context of secular ideologies and traditional religions becoming conscious of missed dimensions in their understanding of the being and becoming of the humanum and involving in an intradialogue to seek a more adequate anthropology as the basis for a genuinely human modernization, that dialogue between religious and secular faiths can achieve new creative insights that can provide a common framework for them to work together. Negatively, it means that ideological and religious fundamentalism, which is against inner reform, is the enemy of true dialogue between religions and ideologies. It is against the background of their common dialogue with modern secular ideologies, conducted with a view to building up a common philosophy and culture enabling a more human process of modernization, that inter-religious dialogue, that is, dialogue among religious faiths and religious communities becomes meaningful.

The central issue of inter-religious dialogue is the problem of building a common cultural basis for a religiously pluralistic society—locally, regionally and nationally. Traditionally, everywhere, state and society have been institutionally integrated with one or the other religion which created the cultural values, determined the laws of the society and

sanctioned the authority of the state. With culture, society and state affirming their autonomy and even separation from religious authority, they have become more or less secularized today. In such a situation, religious beliefs are disestablished and privatized. In some cases, religion is completely ousted from public life which then comes to be based on secular ideologies.

But in other cases, a civil religion with selective insights from a plurality of dominant religious traditions continues to influence public policies. Robert Bellah points out that in the secular state of the USA, the Judeo-Christian religious tradition contributed to such a religious basis for civil life along with scientific and technical rationality. Today, technological advance without spiritual direction having turned inhuman in some areas, a stronger case world-wide is made for strengthening the religious direction of secular civil culture.

It is this which in recent years has produced a revival of religious fundamentalism. And if unchecked it will surely destroy the historical achievements of the age of Enlightenment-Humanism. Therefore, so far as India is concerned, the renascent and reforming religions have to get together to produce not necessarily a civil religion, but a body of anthropological insights about the relation between the transcendent and historical destinies of human persons and peoples, insights drawn from different religions so as to save the idea of a secular and developing human community based on universal human rights and cutting across different religious commitments of people.

In this connection, dialogue among religions with different approaches to the nature and destiny of the human self and the human race is important. Historians of religions have spoken of three types of religious vision—the primal, the mystic and the Messianic. The primal vision is the primitive human awareness of himself/herself as a participant in an inter-related web of 'elemental spirits of the universe', and approaches 'the other — god,

man, animal, tree or pebble, natural or social phenomena', not through analysis but as an extension of oneself through sympathy and symbiosis. This is the character of tribal and village popular religions.

The mystic visualizes the unity of the self with the universal spirit or sees the 'universe in its various aspects and manifestations' as a harmony. He apprehends the spiritual reality behind the flux of life in terms of 'the primordial oneness of cosmic totality'. This is the dominant spirit of the higher religions of India and China. The Semitic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, see God in terms of His 'mighty acts' in human history through the Prophets and the Messiah and the Messianic people of His election, to bring mankind and all creation to the eschatological fulfilment of the Kingdom of God. Monotheism, a sense of history and Messianism are characteristic of this spiritual vision.

vicolas Berdyaev, the Russian philosopher, speaks of two types of Messianism in religions that originated in Judaism. One, the aggressive Messianism of conquest and the other, the universal Messianism of the suffering servant of which the crucified Christ is the symbol. He also points out that even though modern secular humanism is atheistic, it shares the sense of history and the idea of Messianic fulfilment of history. The difference being that this fulfilment is realized through historical forces working teleologically through some Messianic people (rational middle class or proletariat or an enlightened nation or race chosen by history). Here too, there is a perennial conflict between the spirits of the suffering servant and the conqueror. Even those ideological movements which start with the passion to bring about a community of freedom, justice and love seem to undergo a mutation into ideologies of conquest and become the instruments of a new oppression in the process.

One might say that in modern history, the sense of history has become universal, mainly through the militant, Messianic secular ideologies of modernization—liberal, socialist

and Marxist. With technological development becoming universal through the years, the peoples who have traditionally followed primal and mystic religions have acquired the Western Semitic spirit of historical movement and mission and are facing the anthropological and spiritual problems of fulfilling that mission. A recent anthropological study of Naga tribes and their relation to modernization, The Nagas: Society, Culture and Colonial Encounter by Julian Jacobs (Stuttgart, 1990) concludes by saying: 'What emerges is a vigorous sense of history and identity at the level of individual, tribe and nation.'

The Minto-Morley report on India had stated that it was the impact of Western politics and culture that disturbed 'the pathetic contentment' of the people of India and paved the way for the mass movement of national independence. And now, through the post-independence struggles for nation-building, not only the educated middle classes but also the tribals and other ethnic groups, village people, scheduled castes and all the poor, as well as women, have acquired this new sense of history and identity and are in dynamic movement. In most cases, religion is integral to the sense of this selfidentity. Therefore, the question of building a new fraternity of peoples depends on the kind of Messianism to which it gets related. It will determine whether it goes the way of toleration and non-violence, or militant intolerance and violence.

In the early stages of the entry of the non-Western world into modern world history, the tendency of Eastern religions was to assimilate the sense of history and historical mission characteristic of Semitic religions. But with the historical dynamism of technology, nation-state and other forces of modernization coming more fully under the spirit of aggressiveness and conquest, creating strife and wars and dehumanization the world over, there is a tendency to appreciate the unitive cosmic vision of the primal and mystic religious traditions and their ability to correct the destructive militancy accompanying modernization. Of course, without the sense of purposive history moving towards

the future goal of a universal community, there can be no effective motivation for social development along modern lines. But the question is, within that basic framework, how do we prevent it from falling into the spirit of collective selfaggression, and lead it towards the spirit of a community of love and justice?

Leaders of Indian nationalism and socialism were conscious of the necessity of the sense of history as well as the perils of it coming under the spirit of aggressive Messianism. That is why Gandhiji worked out a synthesis between the Hindu spirit of detachment and the spirit of purposeful history symbolized by the cross of Jesus to humanize the dynamism of the national movement. Jawaharlal Nehru was himself a crusader for liberal democratic humanism, but he saw clearly that the perils of Hitlerism and Stalinism arose out of technological modernization being taken over by the extremist crusading spirit of monotheistic religions. So he affirmed that he would temper his sense of history with the spirit of what he called 'paganism', which believed in many gods including an unknown god. His advocacy of co-existence of different ideological systems was a secularization of the co-existence of many gods (Karanjia: The Mind of Nehru).

Ram Manohar Lohia, too, saw that Western spirituality had led to 'strife' while Indian spirituality had led to 'stagnation'. But according to him we needed to develop a third alternative, namely 'to adjust the scientific spirit of enquiry with the emotive spirit of oneness without subordinating the one to the other, and in full equality as two processes of like merit! While the scientific spirit would work against caste and for women, against property and for tolerance, and produce wealth and dispel hunger and want, 'the creative spirit of oneness may secure that ballast without which men's highest endeavour turns into greed and envy and hatred'. He was in search of 'a vital doctrine which shall accept the clean joy of the sensible world without losing insight into the oneness of all life and thing' (Fragments of a World Mind)

In this connection, Lohia also spoke of the coming together of Christianity and democratic socialism in the struggle for the unity of mankind and for social justice in the West. He saw in it the possibility of Western democracy developing such intellectuality as would make the experience of their Christian God a little more mystic and expansive'. The image of Christ on the cross had fascinated him and he added, 'The Christian God is undoubtedly capable of acting as one symbol of unity of love for all mankind' (Marx, Gandhi and Socia-

L oday, there is also a deepening appreciation of tribal and popular village religious traditions, severed from their more magical elements, because they can correct irresponsible modern individualism with a sense of solidarity in organic community. They can check modern technology's exploitative attitude to nature by their belief (and practice) of living in harmony with the rhythm of nature. They can also provide the rationality of intuitive sympathy, participation and communion to supplement and humanize the discursive analytical reason of the scientist and technician. Kenneth Kaunda mentions three aspects of the tribal tradition which can make a contribution to world culture. He says that in the tribal community, men and women are valued for themselves and not for their utility. There is no conceptual cleavage between the natural and the supernatural, and a strong rhythmic pulse beats through all culture (Collin Morris: A Humanist tn Africa).

What I am arguing for is the recognition of different dimensions of spirituality significant for public life, in the various religious traditions and the need for a dialogue among religions in India regarding their respective contributions to the building of a common civil culture. In this common culture different religious communities could participate fully in building the nation-state and a national community without fearing the loss of their respective religious self-identity. At the same time, they could help the people at the bottom, who have traditionally

been outside the power structure, as well as dalits, tribals and women, to become sufficiently aware of the sense of selfhood and social justice to be able to put up an organized fight, non-violent but effective, against their exploitation by the dominant classes, castes and sex.

In his book Religion and the Ambiguities of Capitalism (London 1991), Ronald Preston suggests four criteria which religions could bring to the civil culture: (t) The basic equality of all humans before God as more important than the things in which they are unequal. (ii) A special concern for the poor and unprivileged. (iii) From the religious understanding of human dignity follows the desire that people should participate in all matters which affect their well-being; and from the religious understanding of human finiteness and human desire to overcome it, follows the requirement that the exercise of power should be subject to checks lest it be abused. (tv) The state is an institution under God for the negative restraint of wrong-doing and the positive furthering of conditions which favour rather than hinder the living of a good life (p. 146).

he ultimate validity of the truthclaims of the various religions must be determined by the people and not by the state. Religious freedom as a fundamental human right is based on the equality of persons and peoples, and equal respect for their decisions in the face of the challenge of the ultimate truth. The mystic can be indifferent to the historical nama and rupa of religion, but not the religions committed to historical revelation. Here, too, there is need for more dialogue between mystic and Messianic religions for mutual understanding regarding the different attitudes to 'the right of propagation' of religion which has been a bone of contention for a long time. There is also need for political secularism to prevent religious communities from influencing political trends in the direction of narrow, communal self-interest, for religion in any form should be a symbol of the ultimate human destiny of selflessness or self-giving in love, which links it to universal humanity.

# **Fundamentalism**

T. N. MADAN

CONVENTIONAL wisdom about the outcome of the processes of secularization in human societies everywhere has been put in serious doubt in our times. Not only has religion not been wholly banished from the public arena, it has acquired new force through resurgent and fundamentalist movements. In Latin America, South Africa and East European countries, the Christian Church has played a remarkable role in espousing the cause of oppressed classes and peoples. What attracts greater attention, however, is the scourge of intolerance and terrorism, all in the name of the purity of religious faith, that has characterized the activities of certain groups and parties in recent times, and is generally referred to as religious fundamentalism, or simply fundamentalism.

The word 'fundamentalism' despite the very specific and narrow circumstances of its first use, has by now come to be used as a general, descriptive or naming term, cover-

ing a wide range of developments or movements within and across religious traditions. It therefore no longer makes any sense to speak of fundamentalism in the singular. Our times are witness to a plurality of fundamentalisms which, however, share certain 'family resemblances'.

Fundamentalism was first used in the early 1920s with reference to and among certain conservative Protestant groups in America. Concerned about the implications of the theory of evolution for the Christian faith. and about the efforts of some Christian groups to present modernist interpretations of events described in the Bible, these conservatives insisted on certain fundamentals of faith of which the most crucial were belief in the virgin birth of Jesus, his physical resurrection, and the infallibility of the scripture. These and other fundamentals were stated in a series of pamphlets entitled The Fundamentals which were published between 1910 and 1915.

In the course of time, fundamentalism among various. Christian and Jewish groups came to be associated with the key ideas of the inerrancy of the scripture, the inadmissibility of its modernist interpretations, and the intolerance of dissent. So much so that by the 1970s the Oxford Biblical scholar James Barr was to pronounce fundamentalism a bad word, suggestive of 'narrowness. bigotry, obscurantism and sectarianism'. And then the Iranian Revolution of 1979 broke upon the world ushering a new wave of fundamentalisms concerned with not only scripture but also, and perhaps more importantly, secular power.

The Iranian Revolution under Ayatollah Khomeini rejected the socalled modern, secular worldview: it challenged scientistic discourse and the rhetoric of Western political democracy, both of which had been promoted by the Shah. The ideological foundation of the revolution (and subsequently of the republic) was Islam, but Islam as interpreted by Khomeini. This interpretation was fundamentalist in the sense that it repudiated earlier liberal interpretations and reaffirmed the final authority of the Quran and the example and sayings of the Prophet Mohammed.

Beyond these minima, Khomeini was selective in what he chose to emphasize, most notably the doctrine of the responsibility of the jurists, which he termed one of the fundamentals of Islam. It meant the rule of jurists, rather than of kings, backed by people for whose moral welfare the jurist is responsible. In effect it meant a theocratic state of the kind Islam had never known before. It makes good sense to say that Khomeini's revolution was a particular response to a situation of crisis, a crisis of identity. 'Recover your Islami identity,' Khomeini seemed to be saying 'and everything else that you desire, and which is not against Islam as I understand it, will be granted unto you, including material prosperity.' Control of the state emerged as the key to the achievement of this goal.

So defined, the roots of fundamentalism are centuries old among Muslims in South Asia. The decline of the Mughal empire started with

the death of Aurangzeb at the beginning of the 18th century, which almost coincided with the birth of Shah Waliullah, the leader of a fundamentalist resurgence in years to come. The Shah saw in the disintegration of the Muslim imperium a grave threat to the position of not only the Muslims but Islam itself. He considered recovery of the power of the state the key to the revival of Islam as a religion and as a culture or way of life. His sentiments were shared by the ulama generally, and they too called for spiritual and political regeneration.

L he loss of control over the state was finally rendered absolute when Bahadur Shah Zafar, who was the emperor of Hindustan only in name, was banished to distant Rangoon after the collapse of the 1857 uprising. The crisis that now faced the Muslims was that of Hindu political ascendancy via the introduction of modern (Western), liberal political ideas and institutions. All shades of Muslim public opinion—ranging from the conservative ulama of Deoband, whose call to Indian Muslims was to be the people of the practice of the Prophet and of community, to the modernists of Aligarh-perceived a new crisis.

As the sense of crisis deepened, Muhammad Iqbal gave his famous call for the reconstruction of Islamic thought in the 1920s, seeking to combine the best of Islamic spiritualism with the best in Western philosophy and science. But Iqbal, like his favourite eagle, soared too high in the sky for common people to hear his call. The man who spoke to the masses, in the language of the masses, was Abul-ala-Maududi. whose fundamentalism was literalist (the Quran provides explicit guidance to Muslims everywhere and at all times, and no interpretation or reconstruction is called for) and whose rejection of the Western secular worldview as the new ignorance (jahilyya) was uncomprising. Maududi's first concern was the purity of the faith. The ulama, nationalist Muslims and the Muslim League leadership were all equally excoriated by him as bad Muslims: the ulama because they were conservative, and the nationalists and the Leaguers because they had embrac-

ed the false idols of nationalism and secularism.

Once Pakistan was established. however, Mandudi lost no time in his attempt to remould the new state as rigorously Islamic. It was hard going and not until Zia came to power in 1977 did he have some measure of success. But the impact of Maududi's fundamentalist ideas was felt far and wide in the Islamic world, especially in Egypt. The Egyptian Islamic Brotherhood (dating from the late 1920s) and Maududi's Jamaat-i-Islami, founded in the early 1940s, were the first two fundamentalist movements of the 20th century among the Sunni Muslims. And each took birth in the shadow of secular power within reach but not in hand.

As among the Muslims, so among the Sikhs, loss of state power (the collapse of Ranjit Singh's kingdom) in the middle of the 19th century provided the initial urge towards a fundamentalist interpretation of what was until then a liberal and catholic religious faith. Even the Sikh Holy Book had not then the symbolic value which it was to acquire later. The sense of crisis was heightened by the arrival of Arya Samaj in the 1870s in the Punjab, with its open denigration of the Sikh faith as an independent religious tradition and its efforts to convert Sikhs (and others) back to Hinduism (Arya Dharm) via the rituals of purification (shuddhi). Sikh separatism, dating from then, ran a course parallel to Muslim separatism. But the Akali Dal failed where the Muslim League succeeded in 1947. After independence the urge for an autonomous Sikh state, finding diverse expressions and gradually gathering force, finally got intertwined with the fundamentalist call for the purity of the faith in the late 1970s.

The Nirankaris were the first target of Sikh fundamentalist rage, but Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale soon identified three enemies: 'the fallen' Sikhs, the Hindus who denied a separate identity to the Sikhs, and the godless Hindu-dominated central government. The path-finder, in Bhindranwale's judgement, was Guru Gobind Singh with his messages of strict adherence to the

current code of conduct and of the quest for power. The 'Raj karega Khalsa' of the daily Sikh prayer points to the two emphases of power (raj) and community of pure faith (khalsa).

Lt is often asserted that since Hinduism has no founder, revealed book, minimal doctrine (fundamentals), or church, it is an unlikely candidate for fundamentalist fervour. Actually, the idea of Hinduism as the religion of a variety of cultural groups in different parts of India is a medieval (some would say modern) idea, developed in reaction to the Muslim presence. The Hindus were originally, in the eyes of the Muslims, those Indians who had not yet embraced Islam. Even as late as the late 19th century, Bankim Chandra Chatterji could say that he was not bothered about what Hinduism meant and that it was for those who used the term to define it. The social and religious reform movements of the 19th century took upon themselves precisely this task.

Thus, Dayanand Saraswati proclaimed that the only truly revealed and universally valid scriptures were the *Vedas* and that, therefore, no faith other than Arya Dharm was a true religion. He rejected the *Puranas* and the epics as excrescences, and even downgraded the *Upanishads* which had been a building block in the unitarian efforts of Brahmo Samaj, to give his call of return to the *Vedas*. He denounced idol worship, ritualism, sectarianism and casteism.

Having redefined the Vedas as revealed scripture, lain exclusive claim to true religion, and defined the essentials of faith and practice. Arva Samaj emerged as a fundamentalist movement among the Hindus. The setting for its mission was the crisis ('Aryavrata is full of darkness') arising from the internal corruption of Hinduism and the external threat posed by Christianity and Islam. Although Dayananda did not make any explicit political pronounce-ments, his encounter with the stirrings of Hindu nationalism during his visit to Calcutta in 1873 left a deep impact upon him. From then on he looked at Hinduism and Hindu society in relation to other

religious traditions and stressed its absolute superiority.

Arya Samaj has had its successors in the Hindu Maha Sabha, RSS. and more recently the Vishva Hindu Parishad and the BJP. The concern with Hindu identity and Hindutya belongs to this discourse. The significance of the claim to Ram Janmabhumi lies in its symbolic value as a unifier of Hindus on an all-India scale against secularists who would privatize religion and against non-Hindus (particularly Muslims) who are seen to have in the past inflicted humiliation on Hindus and reviled Hinduism as idol worship. The votaries of a Ram temple see their religion from a different perspective than did the idolatory-hating Dayananda. They see Ram as a warrior whereas Tulsidasa's Ramacharitmanas, which established for him the central position in the religious consciousness of north India, presents him as playful child, dutiful son, fond husband and finally exemplary king. His warrior role is secondary or, at best, only one of his roles. But then, this is precisely what fundamentalism is all about: the redefinition of the past in terms of the perceived needs of the present followed by a call to return to the purity of the faith and practice of the past, of the fundamentals.

rundamentalisms—whether Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian or Jewish-are born in communally perceived times of crisis. They are concerned with critiques of contemporary ways of life, and look to a future where the true believer is twice blessed with 'true' faith and secular power. They are defensive movements which resort to a selective retrieval of the tradition and, in the process, its redefinition. They do not ignore the resources available to them in the present, including those of modern knowledge and technology, but they reject the ideologies of modernism and secularism. They envelope themselves in an aura of idealism but are, in today's world, generally aggressive, if not violent, in character. They are totalitarian and intolerant of dissent. Although each fundamentalist movement has a positive self-image, and generates a self-justifying rhetoric (verbally, in writing, and on videotape), no fundamentalist movement can be said to be more desirable than the others.

# Conceptualizing communalism

K. N. PANIKKAR

WHAT does communalism mean today? Obviously it does not mean the same as it did during the anticolonial struggle. Then it meant, to many, an 'aberration' in Indian polity and society. It was so not only because communalism was viewed as antithetical to nationalism, but also because of the hatred and violence inherent in its practice. Valorizing the anti-colonial nationalism and thus dismissing and disparaging all other forms of consciousness was no answer to the aberration. It only helped the aberration to develop a self-view based on its own notion of nationalism.

The Muslim League, for instance, imputed to minority communalism the character of religion-based cultural nationalism and thus managed to move a section of the Indian population away from mainstream secular politics and finally, to demand and establish a separate theocratic state and to fashion a fundamentalist society. Apart from several underlying causes—political, economic and ideological—apprehension about the future played a decisive role in fanning minority communalism. Democracy, it was feared, would go against the interests of the minority.

The majority communalism in contemporary India is qualitatively different. The Hindus are not likely to be outnumbered in the foresee able future, despite the propaganda about the Muslim demographic spurt. In all walks of life, both private and public, they also have an upper hand. Neither a sense of deprivation nor fear of the future is at the root of majority communalism. Rather, the justification is derived from the 'right' of the majority. Has not the 'majority' a

right to build a temple at Ayo-dhya?

The meaning of communalism is also sought to be defined based on majority. In this new definition communalism is projected as true nationalism; the nation belongs to the majority and is formed by their history, culture and struggles. Nationalism and communalism are thus made synonymous, and Indian nationalism is imputed a Hindu religious character. All notions of nationalism, be they anticolonial or secular, are irrelevant and even unhealthy. Precisely for this reason, V. D. Savarkar had dismissed Mahatma Gandhi as a 'pseudo-nationalist'. While Gandhi bas now been appropriated as a Hindu leader, Savarkar's successors continue to use 'pseudo' to qualify their secular opponents!

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Constructing a religious-national identity in the realm of politics is the current state of play of majority communalism. Integral to the creation of this identity is a clearly discernible shift in emphasis from communal to religious politics. The focus is now on the religious consciousness in society and its mobilization for political ends. For this end, communal antagonism is underplayed and religious solidarity is highlighted. This is not accidental, but intentional. In a society like ours, which is not yet totally devoid of liberal values, the politics of communalism and communal riots are self-limiting; the barrier can be broken only by re-orienting the appeal to the state of social consciousness on which communalism thrives. A change from communal to religious politics is a result of this compulsion. This change, however, is meant to broaden the appeal of communalism and thus to reinforce it, and not to renounce it.

The mobilizing potential of communalism lies in its linkages with the religious belief of the people. An induced perception of communal and religious identity has materialized during the last couple of years. The aggressive propaganda through the invocation of religious symbols has implanted in popular consciousness the construction of a Ram temple as a common cause of the Hindus, regardless of sectarian differences within Hinduism. In several parts of India, particularly in the south and the east, Ram is not a popular deity. But even in these areas, the temple campaign has succeeded in making Ram worship central to Hindu belief.

Organizing politics around such a common religious belief has a greater potential for success than resorting to communal hatred and antagonism. A real religious devotee is unlikely to subscribe to the politics of communal hatred or approve of killings in the name of religion. Yet, he may support politics which advocates the fulfilment of common religious interests. Contemporary communalism, therefore, increasingly identifies itself with religious faith and operates its politics in the guise of religious interests.

A practical implication of this is a shift of focus from 'they' to 'us'. This tactical change is because religion and politics need no mixing. they mix themselves, given the grip religion has on contemporary social consciousness. The religious world of most Hindus is confined to a few simple practices. Daily visits to temples and regular prayers are not very common. The decorated and well-furnished prayer rooms are only found in Hindi films and taking a cue from them, in the houses of the upper classes. To most Hindus, religious practice does not go much beyond reciting a few lines from the epics or applying sandal paste or a quick bowing before street corner deities on their way to work. They entertain no hatred towards the followers of other religions nor target for attack others' places of worship in order to correct historical wrongs.

Yet, they have an unmistakable identity and attachment to their own religion. They are religious. When communities are constructed and politically mobilized, their religious beliefs no longer remain private; they easily merge with the faith of others in the community and enter the public sphere. It thus becomes natural for a housewife who daily reads the Ramayana as a religious ritual to identify herself with the construction of a Ram temple and to become a votary of politics which seeks support from religious faith.

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The current discourse on communalism draws heavily on the past, through what M.M. Bakhtin calls 'historical inversion'. Discussing the 'feeling for time' which influenced the development of literary forms and images, Bakhtin states: The essence of this inversion is found in the fact that mythological and artistic thinking locates such categories as purpose, ideal, justice, perfection, the harmonious condition of man and society and the like in the past. Myths about paradise, a Golden Age, a heroic age, an ancient truth, as well as the later concepts of a "state of nature", of natural, innate rights and so on, are all expressions of this historical inversion. To put it in somewhat simplified terms, we might say that a thing that could and in fact must only be realized exclusively in the future is here portrayed as something out of the past, a thing that is in no sense part of the past's reality, but a thing that is in essence a purpose, an obligation.'

L he communalism of both the majority and minority seems to contain certain elements of this inversion which Bakhtin attributes to folkloric chronotope. Realizing an 'ancient truth' as an ideal is the obligation communalism sets for the future. Since that ideal is invoked as 'truth', it becomes a command, not subject to debate and discussion. This imparts to communalism a definite retrogressive and backward-looking character which is not to be confused with a critical and creative introspection of the past. Instead, the past is valorized in a

manner that the present is stultified and the future endangered.

The notion of 'ancient truth' as an ideal for the future has far-reaching implications. The most important is that the future is a given and not subject to choice. This injects an authoritarian and dogmatic element into the programmes and perspectives of communal organizations and institutions. Dialogue appears to be alien to communalism. Let me narrate a personal experience. I once heard a talk on Vivekananda by a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh worker to an audience consisting of the members of avillage temple renovation committee. According to him, Hindus could 'Om' in the Vivekananda Memorial temple at Kanyakumari. A lady from the audience, a school teacher, wanted to know how this could be rationally explained, since her colleagues ridiculed her for such irrational beliefs. The reply was astounding but seemed to be convincing to the lady: all such criticisms are to be contemptuously dismissed as they are nothing but anti-Hindu propaganda!

Examples can be multiplied. A Delhi doctor, well trained but not necessarily well educated, asserts that just as the birth of Jesus Christ from Virgin Mary is medically impossible, the birth-place of Ram also needs no ascertaining! The celebration of the irrational, the chief character of communalism, has the ability to gain the adherence of both the ignorant and the innocent.

Coercion is another component of contemporary communalism. Its proceedings tend to put considerable pressure on the individual's free choice. This was most acutely felt by religious Hindus who, even if they did not approve of the politics of Ram sila pooja and the rath yatra, felt compelled to support the demand for the construction of the temple. How could a devotee disapprove of efforts to build a temple for Ram, without compromising his religious faith? Once religious identity was invoked, he was left with no choice but to support the venture. Even those Hindus who were not devotees of Ram, such as those in southern and eastern India, found their Hindu identity in peril, unless

they lent their voice to favour the mandir. That the Arya Samajists gave up their anti-idolatry principle and supported the mandir is extremely significant as a pointer to the success of communalism in uniting even the breakaway sects in the name of general Hindu religious interests. Individual and institutional reservations were thus overcome through religious coercion.

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Exposed to the influences of almost all religions in the world, the -Indian intellectual tradition has been enriched by theological debates and discussions. These interactions were not confined to religious disputations alone. They often embraced the entire gamut of social existence and thus assumed greater philosophical relevance. From early times to the late 19th century, all religious orders were participants in these debates. Several ideas of comparative religion emerged out of these interactions. The discussions inevitably underlined differences, but they also explored areas of agreement. One such area was the universal character of all religions. Religions differed from each other only because of the needs of the society in which 'religious truth' found expression and each religion therefore embodied different social ideals. The interpenetration of ideas occurring as a consequence marked a very creative phase in the religious history of India.

Beginning with the saints of the 9th century to the reformers of the 19th century, universalism evolved as an influential religious idea. Ram Mohan, the universal man tried to give it an institutional form and Keshubchandra Sen, the eclectic, sought to incorporate it in his movement. A large number of religious sects and movements have embodied universalist ideals in their social and religious practices.

This important legacy of religious thought appears to be totally lost on contemporary communalism. Is it because universalism, a principle of religious solidarity and harmony, is not conducive to the interests of communalism which underlines division rather than unity in its pursuit

of power? Ignoring this legacy, communalism draws attention to the particular, either Hindu or Muslim. The world of Muslim communalism is not informed by Akbar's Dini-Ilahi or Syed Ahmad Khan's understanding of the Quran and Ahadis. Similarly Hindu communalism is insensitive to the catholic ideas of Hindu reformers and philosophers. Instead, they are constantly in search for what was 'Hindu' or 'Muslim' in the past.

good example of this communal mentality is V.D. Savarkar's Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History. Savarkar characterizes as glorious epochs those in which the Hindus led 'a war of liberation in order to free their nation from the shackles of foreign domination'. The six glorious epochs are those of Chanakya-Chandragupta, Pushyamitra, Vikramaditya, Yeshodarma, the Marathas and the period when Hindus freed India from British dominion. Savarkar's criterion for glory-Hindu assertion and success —is the ideological prop of contemporary communalism.

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Since communal ideology is derived from assumptions of history, politics and culture which do not stand scrutiny, a dialogue between communalism and secularism is not in the offing. Currently there is no meeting ground, as the RSS activists' explanation of 'Om' reigns the communal mind. Despite this, is it possible to create a dialogue? At present, negotiation is mistaken for dialogue, that too, as in the case of the Babri Masjid issue, between two communalisms, with secularists feigning to be either honest brokers or neutral observers.

What is required immediately is a change from the culture of negotiation to a climate of dialogue. For that, an atmosphere devoid of coercion and intellectual dishonesty is necessary. Such a change is imperative if the existing religious consciousness is to be prevented from slipping into communal consciousness. Any compromise dictated by political expediency does not offer a solution, as it would eventually bring the camel into the tent.

### Secularism

ASHIS NANDY

THE political status of secularism in India is no different from the social status of the various traditional systems of healing. Traditionally Indians used a number of indigenous healing systems and did so with a certain confidence as well as scepticism. Gradually modern Indians broke the confidence of their 'ignorant' brethren in such native 'superstitions'. The latter were constantly bombarded with the message that the older medical systems were bogus or, at best, inefficient; that they the ignorant should, therefore, shift to the modern, 'truly universal' system of medicine. Once the confidence of a sizeable section of Indians in the traditional, more easily available systems were destroyed, the situation of course changed. Those who converted to the modern system found it to be costly, inaccessible, often inhuman and alienating. They also found that their modern wellwishers had priorities other than to give them easy access to modern medicine.

Something very similar has happened with the concept of secularism. The concept was introduced into Indian public life in a big way in the early decades of the century by a clutch of Westernized Indians -seduced or brainwashed by the ethnocidal, colonial theories of history-to subvert and discredit the traditional concepts of inter-religious tolerance that had allowed the thousands of communities living in the subcontinent to co-survive in neighbourliness. That co-survival was not perfect; it was certainly not painless. Often there were violent clashes among the communities, as is likely in any 'mixed neighbour-hood'. But such violence never involved large aggregates such as the Hindus or the Muslims. Conflicts were localized and were almost invariably seen as cutting across inter-religious boundaries.

The categories that sustained such inter-religious tolerance were systematically devalued as superstitious

and as indicators of a dangerous, atavistic over-concern with religion. In place of these categories, the concept of secularism was imported as the solution to all inter-religious conflicts in India, something which would do away with the constant ethnic violence and bloodletting that had reportedly characterized the Indian society from time immemorial. 'Reportedly' because no one produced an iota of convincing empirical evidence to show that such conflicts existed on a large scale and involved religious communities as they are presently defined, though everybody in modern India seemed convinced that the data did not exist because Indians did not have a proper history. And had a scientific, objective history existed, it would have shown pre-modern India to be a snakepit of religious fanaticism and blood lust.

Over the last 50 years, the concept of secularism has delivered less and less. By most imaginable criteria, institutionalized secularism has failed. Communal riots have grown more than tenfold and have now begun to spread outside the perimeters of modern and semimodern India. But in the meanwhile, we have already lost much of our faith in the traditional social and psychological checks against communal violence.

What, then, sustains the pathetic faith of modern India in secularism? Why has the concept of secularism hegemonized the entire domain of religious amity and even our understanding of it? Why does even the BJP talk of genuine as opposed to pseudo-secularism, and not religion? Why does the VHP, like a greedy street peddler, sell Ram as a secular national hero, and not as a religious figure?

The answer is obvious. The concept of secularism has served some very important political functions during the last five decades. First, once institutionalized, the concept

has set up modern Indians as the only sane element in an otherwise irrational society. For that reason, they deserve to have disproportionate access to political power. Modern Indians could be a numerically small minority, the argument goes, but they are the ones who have freed themselves from traditional prejudices and, therefore, deserve to guide the destiny of the nation.

Second, this concept of secularism can be easily fitted into the culture of the Indian state, and state in turn can be mobilized to supply the coercive power to actualize the model of social engineering implicit in the imported concept of secularism. So, from the very beginning, secularism statism in India have gone hand in hand. The goal of both is to retool the savage Indians into civilized beings and impose such limits on the ordinary citizens that they, though given democratic rights. would not excercise the rights except within the political frame evolved by the remnants of the Wog empire. In other words, secularism, too, has its class affiliations; it, too, has much to do with who gets what and when in Mother India.

Decularists come in four varieties. First, there are those who are considerate enough to have taken over the white man's burden after the decolonization of the subcontinent. They see it as their bounden duty to educate and modernize the citizens in this part of the world, so that the latter could one day 'deservedly' claim the right to full citizenship. Given the poor learning capacity shown by the South Asians in general, these secularists appear to be very unhappy these days. But underlying the unhappiness there is also a certain glee that the incorrigible Hindoos and Moslems are still fighting like cats and dogs. For only the persistence of such belligerency allows the secularists to justify their privileged access to state power and postpones the day when the plebians could 'legitimately' lay claim to their full democratic rights.

Second, there are the innocent secularists. They are secularists on ideological or moral grounds. Many of them think secularism to be compatible with leftist political doctrines and fashionable leftist slogans. (The fashion has passed, but not the habits of mind associated with it by the elderly or senile 'radicals'.) Many innocent secularists are secularists because they feel it would be embarrassing if they were otherwise. They think secularism is a way of keeping up with the Joneses. Innocent secularism is often sustained by the same social forces that sustain secularism as a white man's burden. Only the innocent secularists are, true to their name, innocent about these forces. Class analysis for them, unlike charity, does not begin at home.

L hird, partly overlapping with the second category, are the secularists to whom secularism is a way of communicating with the modern world and with compatriots who are a part of that world or are breathlessly pining to be so. The motivating force for the third variety of secularists is sometimes the awareness that secularism has come to mean something vaguely good in modern India and they are intellectually too lazy to shed the concept and start anew. Sometimes, of course, this kind of secularist, is also motivated by social mobility or, as the cynical would like to describe it, social climbing.

Such secularism' allows one, at least seemingly, to break the social barriers set up by castes and communities in modern India, and helps one to establish communications not only with the wealthy and the mighty, but also with the metropolitan intellectuals and professionals in the cosmopolitan parts of the country. Many Indian politicians when they pay lip service to the standard, universal concept of secularism, have one eye on the response of the national media, the other on their clever competitors who have profited from the secularist jargon.

Finally, there are the genuine secularists, who can also be called secular communalists, though some are cussed enough to believe that they should be called pseudo-Hindus or pseudo-Muslims. These are the people who use, participate in, or provoke communal frenzy, not on grounds of faith but on grounds

of political expediency and secular cost calculations. Occasionally, in place of political expediency, they are motivated by political ideology and that ideology may appear to be based on faith. But actually it represents only a secularized version of faith and the conversion of religious traditions into 'commoditified' ideologies.

Every community in India today has leaders as well as small-time vendors of violence who are available on hire. They can organize religious violence the way others can organize a political rally or a large-scale criminal enterprise. These people constitute the true, and most self-consistent and effective section of the Indian secularists.

Whatever the intellectually anaemic academic secularists might think, the secular communalists are the true secularists, because their worldview is entirely secular. They are guided by secular considerations and even their use of religion is dispassionate, instrumental and untouched by any value or theory of transcendence. Even hardboiled secularists of the other three varieties often have some sneaking respect for things such as culture, tradition, values and religion, at least in private. The secular communalists genuinely cannot—not even in the privacy of their personal lives—grant any intrinsic sanctity to such non-material, idealistic rubbish. To them it is all a matter of electoral gains or losses and financial profits or risks when it comes to the uses of the subjective or non-material forces in society.

At one time, secularism had something to contribute to Indian public life. It is now the last refuge of the intellectually crippled and morally flawed. It is ethnocidal and pathetically dependent on the mercies of those who control or hope to control the state and those who tend to hover around the Indian state like so many greedy flies. Today, the concept of secularism is chronically susceptible to being hijacked by the violent, the greedy, and the politically ambitious. It has become a conspiracy against the minorities and a means of collaboration with the blood-thirstiness of the Indian statists.

### The sound of thunder

RAJEEV DHAVAN

DIALOGUE is essential to democracy which must convert dissensus into discourse and decision making. The impelling logic of a working democracy is that even where people are unhappy about the ultimate decisions, they are satisfied with the discourse which enabled those decisions, and would be available to oversee, critique and reassess them.

But dialogue has many enemies. The foolish short-sightedness of those who believe that repression can outlaw dialogue. The denial of truth by withholding information so that dialogue ceases to be seasoned by information. The manipulation of ideas in civil society, whether by closing minds through ideologically manipulated consensus or because moral apathy and obedience to authority, is deeply rooted in the lives of all but the most discerning. The purposes of discourse are also defeated when a society—both individually and collectively—is instrumented to think towards narrow consequential gains to the exclusion of the free flow of communication for its own sake.

The Indian Constitution is hostile to dialogue. Devised at a time when tension and division caused blood and mayhem, the Constitution makers created all the dimensions of a 'law and order' state. The various guaranteed freedoms were seriously undermined by extensive restraint, pre-censorship, control over the media, preventive detention, a massive apparatus of regulatory state control and a centralization of power and authority in ways that belittled and obliterated alternative locations of power and authority. The historical truth that such a framework was born out of necessity rather than evil design is singularly unhelpful—not because the proof of the pudding is in the eating but because the historical necessity that articulated the need also confined dialogue within narrow confines.

To some extent, the narrowing vision within which public—and eventually private—dialogue came to be confined was, willy nilly, placed in position by the high sounding ideals impregnated into Indian discourse by India's first Prime Minister and statesman. Nehru created what could be called the *Great Discourse* which grew out of his belief in a future society founded on the rationality of modern science and uniting people into a secular faith imbued with the social equity of a powerful state-sponsored socialism.

Single-minded—perhaps, oversimplified—the significance of the Great Discourse was its all-pervasiveness, its haunting depictions of what would happen if India should fail, its capacity to fuel election campaigns with honest promise and despicable humbug in equal and unequal proportions, and its challenge to the nation's intelligentsia who were expected to find a habitat for it in every sphere of public and intellectual life—law, economics, politics, religion, art, literature, thought and belief.

If people in the freedom movement were summoned to protest by Gandhi, Nehru's invitation to join the Great Discourse was no less well received. The Great Discourse—founded on science, secularism and socialism—had come to stay to dominate administrative and political society and the ideological apparatus of the Indian state. It was the prime motif of governance, the triumphant assertion of the power of the middle class to govern with modern common sense, commitment and compassion.

L he response to the invitation to ioin the Great Discourse was effulgent. Out of this response poured development economics, bureaucratic instrumentalism, sociological jurisprudence, theories of social change, nationalist and socialist music, art, films, literature and poetry and portrayals of India's transition from tradition to modernity. In that climate to join the Great Discourse was mindless or, more cruelly, social and political sedition. Politicians who questioned either the Great Discourse, or the instrumental plans which emanated from it, were marginalized derisively. Judges, jurists and administrators who lacked commitment to the Great Discourse were depicted as unworthy because they were not 'committed' to the right cause. Even journalism had to be 'committed' to certain developmental aims.

Such a pattern of thought had already settled as mainstream wisdom long before it transgressed into repressive enforcement during the Emergency or was vulgarly enshrined in the Preamble of the Constitution in 1976 and portrayed as the triumph of the nation's self-professed aims in the Directive

Principles of State Policy over the guaranteed Fundamental Rights.

Dut before we get carried away into drawing untidy parallels between the Great Discourse and the Cultural Revolution of our mighty neighbour, China, a few cautionary remonstrances are advisable. The Great Discourse was born out of not corruption but honesty. It represented contemporary wisdom, eclectically but powerfully put together by the relatively untutored but clear vision of Nehru. It was not imposed on the Indian people. Although some of its opponents were slaughtered and detained, the Great Discourse was manoeuvred, steered and kept in place by Nehru's personality, the vast party machines of the Congress, the huge state propaganda capability inherited from the British and the virtually unanimous acceptance of its mandate by India's powerful intelligentsia and bureaucracy who became its custodians. None can doubt that the Great Discourse brought Indian society together, tolerably accommodating threats, doubts and fears with considerable skill. Yet it suffered from sins of its own making which are now visible in the aftermath that it left behind.

The primary and statutory custodians of the apparatus of regulation and planning which the Great Discourse produced were politicians and administrators. Scandals beset this custodianship—whether it was the Mundhra deals at the centre or Kairon in the Punjab. Soon massive corruption became such an ordinary feature of Indian governance that no one bothered about it. The special in-house Bureau set up after the Santhanam Committee Report of 1962 is as undervalued as it under values the importance of honesty in public life. Much is known, but officially undetected. And, where politicians are themselves under fire -as with Bofors—the limits to which power is twisted and constitutionality compromised to exculpate the accused (whether with or without honour) slowly kills the system without really wiping the stain:

After Bofors, the Joint Parliamentary Committee has ceased to be an instrument of investigative cons-

titutional authority. Nothing has stemmed the tide. Neither public exhortation nor the prescriptions of the Administrative Reforms Committee's many-volumed reports. The corruption or 'privatization' of power has been endemically fed by political processes. It has grown out of the trinity of political circumstances which requires politicians to win power through elections, create party machines to secure victory and then, either reward rank and file with the patronage of favours or allow them to terrorize local and state administrations so that the state at all levels becomes the preserve of regime interests, unscrupulous party hacks and political marauders.

There is an irony in all this. Corruption—and its constitutional effect, the privatization of public power—is a gift of democracy! It is the forces of democracy—which in India's context means no more than the crude process by which elections are won—that have swallowed up public power and subsumed it as private fiefdom.

Indian governance is founded on three fundamental principles: democracy, the rule of law and social equity. All three principles have acquired pathological dimensions which deprive them of meaning. Democracy espouses day to day participation and accountability in public affairs at all levels. Large parts of governance of all levels have collapsed. Local government no longer exists except in some states; and that too as political confetti. The crude ways in which power is appropriated and influenced into submission denies participation. If the private media exposes this, its voice is only partially heard and increasingly manipulated and ignored. Accountability has become a matter of form rather than substance.

The rule of law, which sounds like an empty formula, is crucial to defining the difference between public and private power. For public power can only be exercised for public purposes. Many influences and interests may impinge on the exercise of public power but ultimately, the rule of law demands that public reasons and public justifications attend the

exercise of public power. It is on this that the very notion of a Constitution is founded. If democracy has been privatized by political hoodlums, it is democracy—in this aberrated form — which has destroyed the rule of law and constitutionalism.

No doubt, India's famed law courts have tried to stem the tide. The power of judicial review in the High Courts and Supreme Court are powerful instruments of accountability. We have only to examine the dockets of these courts to see that the writ jurisdiction has increased dramatically. This means that more and more actions are being filed (no doubt, for private reasons) for questioning governmental legislation and actions and to make them accountable within a framework of the rule of law.

Law, lawyers and courts are mediators of accountability at all levels of society whether this accountability is wreaked out of errant husbands, truculent in-laws, powerful companies or government. Government and business interests are aware that law courts can be a nuisance. Over the years, judicial appointments have been made to select 'acceptable' or pliant judges in addition to the direct corruption of judicial functionaries and their registries in particular causes or matters.

Here, too, there is a failure of dialogue—a diminishing belief that juristic discourse is necessary. Consequences have become more important. The legal process is geared to providing interlocutory stay orders as its main purpose. The fact that the jurisprudence of Indian courts remains rich is a tribute to that small band of lawyers and judges who still believe in India's commitment to legality and its constitutional enterprise.

The most damaging disturbance in the dialogue about governance in India has been in respect of its commitment to social equity. The sheer size of the differential between rich and poor, region and region, castes and community, individuals and groups is frightening. The sad truth about contemporary India is that the

country seems to exist for only 10% of its people. That 10% have now—under the new economic policies—claimed to be the new champions of the future. They want power, resources, opportunity and support.

But what of the rest? Once the raison d'etre of India's existence, they have become playthings of the political process. These remaining 90% are roughly equally divided into those who are in the exploited sector (who are part of the mainstream economy, including the relevant unemployed) and those in the genocide sector (who are redundant to the economy as a whole and for whom survival depends on social and political will rather than economic opportunities).

As the elite 10% for whom India seems to exist get carried away to cocoon and harness their privileges, their consumerism and their show of power with increasing brazeness and vulgarity, those in the exploited and genocide sectors are now also on the march. They do not just want food, but also power. Power in the civil services and politicallyfor they have seen what power can do and what direct and indirect dividends it brings. The great controversies over the Mandal Report are about empowerment and not just opportunities.

But the 10% to whom India's political economy is geared are fearlessly and fiercely shortsighted. They are steadfast in their aims. They see the warning signs. There is violence everywhere espousing demands for property, power and opportunity. Towns as well as the countryside have ceased to be safe. And the thin link of khaki which constitutes police protection is no defence. The police, too, has slowly joined the predators in the free-forall which is increasing daily. The privileged 10% are thus faced with the exacting challenge of consolidating their power?

How should they do it? Repression is only one answer; but the forces at their command are slender. To some extent — and that is self-evident from the victory of the Congress in 1991—the nation fears chaos (or matsya nyaya, the

law of the fishes, as our ancient texts called it). The fear of chaos consolidates the hold of our rulers. But, it is not—and cannot be—enough. People cannot just be governed by repression and the fear of negative consequences. They need consolation from the past and redemption for the future. Indian socialism—with its many slogans—provided this assurance until each one of its messages was washed again and again in the cynical acid that emptied them of strength and meaning.

Our contemporary dialogue is churlish about socialism. Yet, it has no alternative principle or dialogue which can pledge this nation to peace—not even temporarily. We have sold out on the 10% solution, hoping that total empowerment of the 10% will yield dividends for all. But this will neither result in the comprehensive dividends that social justice requires or elicit the consent which the polity desperately needs in order to sustain governability.

The dialogue with the masses has become unconvincing and meaningless. The 10% who are the self-styled beneficiaries of India's deregulated plans seem less exposed to their vulnerability than the possibilities a liberalized economy will bring to them, less conscious of the responsibilities of power than the advantages that power can be made to irresponsibly broker, and less acutely aware that time may run out before the nation unleashes powerful, impossible and uncontrollable forces.

Where is the room for dialogue? On what principles will it be based? Where will it be located? What are the forces that will appropriate it? In the 1950s, it was thought that the Constitution was an adequate framework for dialogue and discourse. In the 1960s and—more pungently—in the 1970s, the Constitution became the vehicle of legalized greed but de hors social legitimacy.

In the 1980s, a rear-guard action of social activists, judges and jurists, sought to argue that the Constitution (including the institutions and processes it created and engendered)

could be the situs of struggle. It was a plaintive appeal by the concerned, inviting people to locate struggle within the Constitution rather than outside it. The importance of this appeal has been much undervalued. We have only to look around us to see that there is an increasing crescendo of demands that are being located—violently and otherwise—outside the framework of the Constitution.

As the country is engulfed in upheaval, the invitation to constitutional dialogue is being repudiated across the board. The sad events amongst the Soviets provide false parallels which are far from helpful. And many political parties—which have decided to thrive on revived fundamentalism—are creating fission as the price of power. Soon no one will care whether India should survive as a political entity or simply as an idea. These appear to be the nebulous choices that seem to gather clouds on future horizons.

Meanwhile, a multiplicity of dialogues is taking place. The formal constitutional dialogue between officials, Chief Ministers and states is being re-vamped in Inter-State Councils and planning fora. Yet, it cannot even resolve the issue of water resources between two riparian South Indian states. The secessionist and violent dialogue between armed dissidents and government has evaded institutional solutions and found expression in uneasy ceasefire's and 'truces'. The dialogue of the empowerment of backward classes led to violent clashes which brought the nation to a halt. The dialogue of intellectuals has become more and more insular. The traffic of ideas in newspapers, magazines and books are also part of status games amongst India's highly qualified, volatile, competitive and ambitious intelligentsia. And, as struggle breaks from protest into wild and organized insurrection, there is no credible dialogue within which the nation can be pledged to peace.

Unfortunately, the custodians of civil and political authority in India seem to hear no voices other than their own. They are afraid that the re-location of power will disempower them. The states have been reduced

to municipalities; and municipalities into enclaves of private flefdom. The acquisitive have been co-opted into the system through party politics as predators. Yet, the basic instinct of the Constitution was sound. Secularism and socialism alone can satisfy a nation so longitudinally diverse in its religions and communities and so latitudinally drawn apart by social and economic differential. What has eluded us is honesty and the simple gift of common sense which reminds people where their power ends and their duty to respect the rights of others begins. What has eluded us also is the simple communitarian emotion that everything must be equitably shared at all levels of the political economy.

**B**ut ultimately there is an even simpler historical reminder as contemporary history paints its gray in gray. A system of governance cannot just find faith in political society. Amongst a myriad of faiths. what we lack is a civic faith which captures the imagination of people in civil society and sustains their togetherness and belief in the future. Alienated from power, condemned to be 'roulette wheel beneficiaries' of an irresponsible welfare state and with no local control of the matters that concern them, the masses (tired of being manipulated through unscrupulous intermediaries) have turned their back on both dialogue and the state. It is their dialogue that has to be relocated in a new configuration of local political, and national renewal.

Without a civic faith, no modern state can survive. It can only lapse into the chaos of greed or the sinuous confines of a politically contrived fundamentalism of religion and group identities which in turnin its present context—is no more than an invitation to surrender to undefined sentiments, manipulated by medieval minds through modern methods. If we must talk, let us talk of simple things—what we owe to each other rather than what we think is owed to us. If civil society accepts this message, political so-ciety must—and will be—forced to do so. And if common sense will not persuade, the sound of thunder will be heard not too far away.

# Can marxism be 'dialogic'?

AIJAZ AHMAD

DIALOGIC is a problematic term, since it is descended not from one tradition of thought but from twoone associated with an anti-Stalinist tendency in Marxist cultural theory represented by such writers as Voloshinov, Medvedev and Bakhtin; and the other associated with Martin Buber, the zionist theologian-philosopher — so that the same term lends itself to entirely different connotations. The title of this brief essay is not of my choosing in any case, and I have readily agreed to use it because, first, it is both a pleasure and a privilege to write for Seminar, and second, because this offers me the opportunity to summarize some thoughts about Marxism and its relationship with some other forms of knowledge and political practice, past and present.

I begin with the proposition that although Marxism arose as a theoretical critique of the capitalist mode of production and as a politics directed at the supersession of this mode, the history of Marxism has been deeply marked by the general context of democratic demand, workers' militancy and campaigns for women's rights within which it initially arose, and subsequently, by

the many environments, political and cognitive, which it encountered as it became a global force over a whole century. The passage of Marxism from the industrial heartlands of Western Europe to the predominantly agrarian societies of Asia is an obvious instance of a process which has transformed Marxism radically. The ongoing 'dialogue' between Marxism and feminism, still at a rudimentary stage of its theoretical formulation, would be another such instance which promises to revamp many of the categories through which Marxism has historically thought of such social processes as 'production' or 'labour'.

Since we are using the word 'dialogue' in a very loose sense, it is possible to reflect in this essay, howsoever briefly, on the relationship of Marxism not only with such adjacent historical forces as nationalism and secularism but also with its chief antagonist, capitalism itself. I should especially like to comment on the currently beleaguered category of 'secularism', because of the vascillations that currently prevail among considerable sections of the liberal intelligentsia, thanks no doubt to the felt pressures from the fascist right. But it is also

worth remarking that while the stupendous power of capitalism has undoubtedly been the central element in determining the fate of Marxism in our era, the pressures exerted by communism on the one hand and by social democracy on the other—the two massive traditions descended from classical Marxism—have been equally central in transforming the nature of modern capitalism itself. This too would require some summary comment.

oordinates of the present discussion preclude the key consideration of the fate of Marxism in communist countries, past and present. Nor do I comment on the uneven development of political Marxism itself. What I should like to foreground is the diversity of directions which political Marxism has taken in the course of its history, its relationship with ethical and secular domains, and the humanizing imprint it has left upon the otherwise vicious structure of capitalism itself. I refer to the Indian experience where the argument so requires.

Ι

The Marxist form of knowledge was born, as Lenin once put it, in a dialogue between German philosophy, British political economy and French socialism—the three major traditions of thought descended from the Enlightenment. We may propose three amendations in this formulation. One is that Marxist thought drew equally from some other currents of thought, such as the Scottish Enlightenment, Vico's materialist historicism in Italy, and the Romantic critiques of capitalist industry and bourgeois individualism, as we find it in Rousseau, Blake, Goethe and others.

Second, this multiplicity of inspirations has the shape not of distinct 'constituent elements', as Lenin phrased it, but of a synthesis, in the exact sense which Hegel gave to this term: a dialectic of full assimilation and full surpassing of the very elements of thought which constitute any particular mode of knowledge in the first place. Third, one might even say that the European 19th century witnessed a fundamental bifurcation in the Enlightenment project. While the ruling ideologies,

also inspired by some tendencies within that Enlightenment, descended into the most vicious kinds of racism, imperialist nationalisms, defence of capitalist property and colonial conquest, it was principally in Marxism that the universalist project of the more progressive aspects of the Enlightenment survived, in the form of the most sweeping contentions against the exploitations of race, class and colony.

As a politics, Marxism inherited and carried further the three great movements of emancipation dating from the 19th century: the movement for political democracy, the workers' movement against capitalist exploitation, and the movement for women's emancipation. It has been the unique achievement of Marxism to have been the first to start negotiating theoretically the link between these three overlapping structures of oppression. Marx's own political exile began, well before he had become a socialist in any recognizable sense, in consequence of his activities in opposition to German autocracy. Engels' move from Germany to Manchester had already yielded the great work, Conditions of the Working Class in England, before his partnership with Marx was fully consolidated.

▲ here is little methodical statement in Marx's own work about' the oppression of women, and a century of further advances in the women's movement has rendered much of Engels' own writing on the subject substantially obsolete, but it is worth remarking that Engels' ideas were not only superior to the ones held by the most advanced of the bourgeois men, such as Mill and Montague, but were in some considerable respects more advanced than even those of such seminal feminists as Mary Wollstonecroft. This tradition was then inherited by the next generation of Marxists-Lenin, Krupskaya, Clara Zetkin, Kollontai, Rosa Luxemberg, Emma Goldmann, and hosts of others—who carried the debate much further than their contemporary suffragists.

Thus it is that when the Soviet Union came into being in a very backward society, at a time when women in England and much of Western Europe did not even have the vote, legislation for the protection of women was more advanced there than anything that France or Italy, the historic homelands of the Renaissance and the bourgeois revolution respectively, were to have until the 1960s—and that too under pressure from the communist and socialist parties. It is also simply a fact that the status of women in the Asian Republics of the USSR remained incomparably superior, despite all the Stalinist ravages, than anything Muslim women have known anywhere else in the world, including such masterpieces American-style embourgeoisment as Turkey or Tunisia.

L he fourth, and in some ways the largest, intervention of Marxism has been in the colonial question and the consequent liberation move-ments. It is a matter of great importance for comprehending the history of Marxism that a theory of political practice which arose initially with the object of emancipating the industrial working classes of Western Europe became, from the 1920s onward, a fundamental element in anti-colonial struggles of predominantly rural, non-industrial societies, not only in China, the Indo-Chinese countries and Southern Africa where Marxists actually led these struggles but also in numerous other countries-Indonesia Malaysia, Iraq, Sudan, Algeria, to a lesser extent India, and many others-where the leadership remained with other strata but where Marxism left an indelible mark on the liberationist imaginations, which expressed themselves in countless forms, from the peasants' struggles to the production of historical and social knowledges.

As Marxism expanded from its initial enclaves in Western Europe to become a global force, it encountered numerous specificities of national and regional formations. In Southern and Central America for example, as in the Philippines, Marxism encountered the Catholic Church, as an authoritarian structure in many aspects but also as a major inspiration in the existing peasant resistances; in Guatemala, Colombia, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and indeed in the Philippines, Marxism grew in tandem with liberation

theology. For Israel-Palestine, the idea of a bi-national state, with equal rights for Jews, Christians and Muslims alike, came from Marxist circles, notably the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Communist Party of Israel, and the Marxist group within the Fatah. It is the zionist state which has always rejected this vision of an egalitarian, inter-faith polity.

In Iran the culture was Islamic, and it is worth remembering that the ferocity of Khomeini's clerical fascism, once it had taken power, was exercised unremittingly against those groupings, such as the Mujahideen-e-Khalq, which had sought a bridge between Islam and Marxism. A quarter century earlier, the Indonesian Communist Party, then the largest in Asia after the Chinese, had sought to build a progressive consensus on the basis of a united front comprised of Marxism, Islam and Sukarno's anti-colonial nationalism; lakhs were killed in a matter of three weeks in order to suppress the practice of that dialogue of adjacent aspirations, so that Indonesia could be made safe for multinational capital.

L he recent sympathetic invocation of Bhakti by the CPI (M) is no mere expediency which dilutes some a priori anti-religiosity which is said to be inherent in political Marxism. I myself discovered Bhakti as a child, first as song in my own rural, left-wingish household (Meera, Surdas and Kabir were special favourites) and then through Urdu writers and critics who were members both of the Progressive Writers Association and the Communist Party. Communism's relationship with religion has not been, in other words, nearly as simple or uniform as it is sometimes believed to have been. Suppression of religion in the Bolshevik project is well enough known; that kind of repression led to the predictable result, namely that religion not only continued to live a subterranean and perhaps enlarged existence but also was fully assimilated to reactionary purpose.

Elsewhere, history has been even more complex. In the Sandanista revolution, the partnership between Marxism and certain strands of the Church should be better known than it is; three priests sat, after all, in the first cabinet that emerged after the bloody battle of Managua, in charge not only of culture but also foreign affairs, which included relations with both NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Together with the Ortega brothers, those three served as principal actors in a revolutionary government, and the most ascetic of them, Ernesto Cardinal, is of course the best Latin American poet of his generation.

In the Philippines, the presence of clergy and laity in the Communist Party, in the New Peoples' Army and in the National Democratic Front (NDF), was so extensive that Marcos in one of his flourishes declared that the Catholic Church had become more of his enemy than the communists themselves, for which he earned a rebuke from the Cardinal of Manila who reminded him of all the support that the upper echelons of the Church had given to the dictatorship.

The history of 'dialogue' has been far more extensive, in other words, than the religious right, or the right in general, would care to admit. Nor has religion suffered any notable persecution in the two states of India, Kerala and West Bengal, where the left has run the government for many years. These states are known, rather, for a far better record of communal peace than most states of the Union, including the one that has given the country most of its Prime Ministers. Whether or not this commendable record of communal peace shall survive the ongoing rise of Hindutva in both these states is anybody's guess.

### Π

About the relationship between Marxism and secularism three things, at least, can be said. The first is that Marxism neither invented nor substantially expanded the meaning of secularism, which was simply an existing and stable part of the climate of ideas Marxism inherited from the intellectual and revolutionary traditions of the European 18th century. Even what Marx says about religion itself, in his youthful critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* for example, adds

not a jot to what was already there in Voltaire or Rousseau or Diderot.

Second, secularism arose not on the terrain of theology or metaphysics but in a rather precise history of economic and political powers. As such, secularism's adversary is not religion but theocracy and sectarian strife. Secularist ranks have always included substantial numbers of atheists and agnostics, but the vast majority of people who insist on secularism have always been believers in God. The issue of separation between Church and state arose in the precise context of the destruction of feudal society in Europe where the Church had been the largest single landowner as well as the locus of state power in large parts of the continent. The issue of exclusion of religion from practices and patronages of the state arose in response to the massive history of sectarian strife both in medieval Europe and during Europe's passage from medievality to modernity, and to both overt and covert uses of state power in suppressing one faith while refurbishing another.

Half a century before Marx put pen to any scrap of paper, secularism got enshrined as a constitutional principle in the United States, the first country to obtain a written constitution of the bourgeois type, precisely because a number of Christian sects had fled from religious persecution in Europe to havens in America and now wanted to provide maximum protection to all varieties of belief, including the lack of belief in God. (It is interesting to note that before the Americans invaded his country, Ho Chi Minh, the most uncompromising of all communists but also one of the saintliest of human beings in this century, had thought of using the American Bill of Rights as the Preamble to a Vietnamese Constitution—in a remarkable exercise of what we have here broadly called 'dialogue').

Because the politics of secularism arose in response to persecution of religious minorities, secularism has always been less preoccupied with the exercise of majority religions and more with the protection both of minority rights and individual rights. It requires of the state that the state not only grant to members.

of religious minorities the same rights as to anyone else but also that it perform the function of moral educator in the eradication of religious prejudice and redress of any consequences of prior discrimination. In the sphere of individual rights, it requires the state not only to guarantee the right to worship any deity that the individual chooses, or to worship none, but also to protect individual freedom in such private matters as choice of partner in marriage, with no regard to religion or caste, so far as the state is concerned, even though such practices may not be condoned by clan or religious community. Hence the institution of civil marriage.

It is in consideration of matters of this kind that it is incumbent upon the secular state to enforce a common civil law and to restrict the religious rights of particular communities to strictly religious matters. The only sphere where the secular state can potentially collide with 'religion' is where its conception of social equality before civil law is challenged by self-appointed interpreters of particular religious doctrines. In all such cases, secularism requires that sovereignty rest with government of the whole people and not with interpreters of particular doctrines. That is to say, it is incumbent upon the secular state, in all such cases, to adjudicate individual rights in the light of common civil law and not in light of doctrinal difference. Violation of this principle in the Shahbano case, for example, was a violation of the rights of the individual concerned and had the long-term effect of imposing unbearable costs on the Indian people.

Secularism holds that rights are inalienable and therefore not subject to pre-emption from the majority position. Muslim zealotry in Kashmir at the expense of Hindu Kashmiris, no matter in how small a minority, is no more condonable than the campaigns for permanent inferiorization of Muslims, numerically a far larger minority, in the Gangetic heartlands. These are two faces of the same coin, repugnant to secularism and Marxism alike, both of which would demand that the state perform its role of moral

educator and enforcer of civil equality by acting against all those manifestations of religious bigotry which have threatened or promise to threaten equal rights and respect for all citizens.

Marxism and secularism alike would look with suspicion on the inclusion of religious ritual in ceremonies of state, any religious rituals even if more than one religion is thus represented. They would do this not because they believe there is anything inherently wrong with religious rituals (most secularists, as I said, believe in one religion or another, and usually in the sanctity of more than one; and more Marxists believe in God than 18 commonly acknowledged) but because the introduction of such ritual in affairs of state inevitably sets in motion a dynamic which leads to the privileging of the religion of the majority, simply because it is the majority even of the state personnel. Secularism does not conflict with religion's ethical domain, but the proper constitution of this domain requires that the entire nexus which connects worship with money and political opportunisms be broken.

In India, secularism arose in the colonial period and became cherished value after Independence, not because of some shallow attachment to the West, as rightwing ideologues and the fashionable subalternist historians argue, but out of the necessities of a huge, multi-religious population which had been experiencing, since the latter half the 19th century, escalating levels of communal strife. By the latter 1920s, well before the Partition, this strife was producing rivers of blood. Secularist ideology grew among us as a covenant of peace and mutual compassion. While we work towards the construction of a society in which such compassion would become second nature to all of us, the likely victims of wellknown mechanisms of communalism have to be protected by a legal authority which invokes none of the religions in whose name communalism operates in society.

The creation of a reasonable social order cannot be postponed until the emergence of a perfect moral order. Nehru's personal views about

religion have nothing to do with it: devout men like Gandhi and Azad were entirely agreed with Nehru on this matter, and Gandhi's devotion to secularism was as deep-seated as his devotion to the Bhagvad Gita and his will to be a Hindu reformer. Like all God-fearing secularists, probably more than most, Gandhi had two overriding religious concerns in the public sphere: the eradication of the more obvious structures of violence in the public practice of his own religion, and the safeguarding of the rights of minorities, in the context of a tolerant and ecumenical society.

After Partition's holocaust, it was the moral duty of the Indian state to heal the wounds as much as possible, by providing secure existence to the broken families of destitute refugees who had been driven out of Pakistan; to protect the Muslim minority within India, which had been traumatized by riots and by migrations to Pakistan on part of the most dynamic sections of their families and neighbourhoods; and by promising intra-faith peace on the basis of civil equality, protecting all citizens from injury to that which they, or any section of them. held sacred. Regardless of what Pakistani rulers did or did not decide, India refused to become a Hindu Rashtra because the human costs of institutionalizing and infinitely perpetuating the grievances and carnages of 1947 were deemed unacceptable.

That will to resist communal carnage has been stronger in theory than in practice, and is becoming less and less strong as years go by. And because the periodic blood-letting was never stopped energetically enough, the strife has become rather more than less institutionalized, so that what we need now is not the relaxing but the refurbishing of the secularist covenant. I might add that as considerable sections of the liberal centre begin now to soften toward elements of competing communalisms, it is among the Marxist left that the bridge toward the essentially liberal values of secularism has been the sturdiest.

т

If Marxism itself has been continually transformed by the diverse

environments in which its myriad practices have been elaborated, it is equally true that Marxism has helped transform the whole of the global landscape in the course of this century. For, Marxism has arguably had as much concrete impact in the capitalist countries as in the communist ones. One might even say that the pressures of Marxism helped transform capitalist societies, for the better, as much as capitalism transformed the communist societies, for the worse. This one can see as much in Europe as in Asia.

In societies of advanced capitalism, especially after the Second World War but in some regions even before that, Marxist interventions were of two different kinds. There was, on the one hand, the actuality of the threat of communist revolutions; advanced capitalism responded to this felt threat by not only preparing for war but also by introducing far-reaching reforms. A good deal of what the working people of Western Europe gained in this period was owed to communist threat to capitalism from within and without. But there was also the presence, often combined with governmental participation, of social democracy, with its thesis that in conditions of liberal democracy a transition to socialism could be made through gradual accumulation of far-reaching reforms.

Reforms undertaken under communist pressure and reforms undertaken by social democracy, which was itself frequently reacting to communist pressure, combined to transform the social structure of advanced capitalism to such an extent that in considerable areas it became very, very different from its 19th century antecedant. No transition to socialism of course occurred, but some facts here are worth remembering. Throughout Western Europe, in the course of this whole century, roughly five workers joined social democracy for every one that joined communism.

The fate of socialist transition in Western Europe was sealed not only by the fact that communism and social democracy equally failed to overcome their historic split, which

contributed to the rightward drift of social democracy on the one hand and to deepening dogmatism and intransigence within communism on the other hand. In this context, the fact that only a minority of the European working class actually came to communism while the left kept losing ground to the right within social democracy, had devastating consequences. It was only with the eventual victory of the right that social democracy formally renounced its linkages with Marxism while commitment to reform socialism remained. Unprecedented levels of prosperity, which Western Europe came to enjoy during this period, contributed greatly to these trends. Capitalism won, ultimately, on the terrain of economic determination. Its power as a world system. hence its power to produce far greater wealth for its heartlands and for its associated bourgeoisies in the decolonised zones, proved decisive.

It was under the twin pressures of communism and social democracy, at any rate, that it became the norm in Western Europe to guarantee unpolluted water, unadulterated food and cheap electricity to its populations; to minimize unemployment; to assure as much as possible a decent life for the majority of its elderly, the unemployed, the divorced with small children; to grant maternity leaves and secure jobs for pregnant women; to subsidize education and housing and health for a broad strata of citizenry; to provide insurance along with wage-work and to tie wage rates to rates of inflation; to upgrade the availability and aesthetic quality of public space; to have heated homes and running water and comfortable travel; to care, generally, about public misery and to introduce regressive taxation for the alleviation of misery. Such norms are now so stable in Western Europe that we tend to forget how very recent they are, how much a response they have been to the possibility of revolution, how many millions have sacrificed for this response to be made and this civilization to come into being.

Among Marxism's main contributions in Asia we may emphasize two: radicalization of trends within

the anti-colonial movement, and the creation of popular consciousness that the real content of a democratic revolution resides not in mere parliaments but in the transformation of agrarian life and emancipation of the peasantry. So far as the anti-colonial movements are concerned, not only were the great revolutions in Indo-China and Southern Africa made under the Marxist flag, not only is the dissolution of apartheid in South Africa owed primarily to the overlapping energies of the Communist Party and the African National Congress, but a whole host of other progressive manifestations, from the Tripoli Declaration of the Algerian NLF to Nehru's famous 'Red Years' which left a mark on the subsequent evolution of India, were owed to Marxist proddings and influences.

Meanwhile, the most radical land reforms have been carried out either under socialism itself, as in China or North Korea, or in countries which undertook those reforms in order to prevent socialist revolution. as in South Korea or Taiwan. In countries like India, Malaysia or the Philippines, where large communist movements existed at one time or another but were either defeated or otherwise contained, land reforms were carried out but with far more mixed results. In countries like Pakistan, where communism had minimal impact, land reforms were also late and minimal.

In particular regions, like Kerala, where communists formed governments within the context of the republic of the bourgeoisie, more gains were made in the areas of education, health and supply of basic foods than anywhere else in the country. On the level of whole countries, China feeds and takes care of its population better than India does, even though India's population is smaller and the land less mountainous. And, of course, what little redistributive justice or non-communal secular decency the Indian state practices is owed primarily to either communist pressure or Nehruvian social democracy, or both. The record of the left is not what it should have been, but it is, on whole, not nearly as bad as it is usually made out to be.

While we are on the subject of the 'dialogue' between Marxism and adjacent aspirations, and the interventions of socialism in humanizing the capitalist system itself, it may be useful to close with a few words on Nehruvian social democracy, so much under attack these days. One does not have to be a Nehruvian to remember that the intelligentsia which is today the most voluble in denouncing that model of development is itself the beneficiary, indeed the product, of huge subsidies to institutions of higher learning and academic excellence, without which they could not have themselves become what they are. It is quite the fashion these days, among intellectuals, to ask for American-sponsored 'liberalisation' and 'privatisation'. Had the Indian universities charged huge sums of money, as American universities do, few of these gentlemen, if they did not already belong to the parasitic upper crust, would be where they are.

It is thanks to that model of development that, among all the capitalist countries which gained their independence after the Second World War, India came to have, not only as proportion of population but in absolute terms, the highest proportion of technical personnel and graduates of the human sciences; the largest industrial base; relatively the most independent model of development; relatively the largest number of constitutional and legal safeguards; in possession of the largest social space where fascists and liberals and communists can contend politically without immediate threat of military intervention, at least so far.

These achievements are only relative; in most respects, India is a bundle of horrors. But it is worth emphasizing that much of what is good in the Indian political system is owed to the tense but also highly sophisticated and intricate balances (yet another instance of 'dialogue') negotiated between social democracy, liberalism, civil rights libertarianism, and communism, in the face of countless and reprobate onslaughts. There is little else for which the system of governance is in a position to congratulate itself.

Listening to nature

VANDANA SHIVA

I VIEW ecology as the science and art of listening to nature. Environmental destruction starts when an ecological dialogue with nature stops. This dialogue has been stopped because industrialism as ideology transforms nature from living systems into a mine of raw material—dead and inert, a resource which does not rise from itself, but gets value only through industrial exploitation. The devaluation and deadening of nature is linked to the devaluation and dispensability of local communities which live in and through nature, which dialogue with it and participate in its rhythms and processes.

The end of the ecological dialogue is linked to the emergence of reductionist experts who can listen neither to nature nor to people, and in their deaf arrogance build knowledge systems which tear nature and communities apart. It is also linked to authoritarian structures of decision-making by states and superstate institutions like the World Bank. Distant decision-making and distant knowledge cannot enter into a dialogue with nature. Hence they fail to be ecological.

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Dialogue

The development paradigm was premised on this deafness. However, there are some recent environmental trends which perpetuate the lack of dialogue characteristic of development experts and agencies. In the absence of a dialogue, 'environmentalism' itself becomes anti-nature and anti-people as is illustrated by recent analysis of environmental problems in the Himalaya-Ganges system and global environmental issues.

I

Ecology movements in our context have emerged from a double dialogue—a dialogue with nature and a dialogue with people and communities who engage in a dialogue with nature through their everyday lives. The ecological dialogue has corrected two distortions in the development process. The first distortion is related to treating resources and ecosystems that are ecologically related as being separate. For example, forests are treated as separate from and independent of rivers and water systems. Upland catchments are treated as separate from downstream flood plains. This gives rise to reductionist and fragmented knowledge.

The second distortion is related to excluding people who know local ecosystems intimately from having a role in knowledge production and the decision-making processes. Ecology movements stress the ecological and political imperative of seeing the connectedness within nature and respecting the connectedness of people with the local ecology.

In the early 1970s, India's indigenous environmental movement was born in the Himalaya as Chipko Andolan. Most of us who joined the environmental movement during the 1970s as activists, researchers, journalists and writers, and most environmental organizations which come up in India in the 1980s, were created, as it were, through the 'Chipko school of ecology'. The most significant contribution of the Chipko movement was the link it re-established between the protection of the natural forest cover in the Himalaya and the stability of the water cycle to reduce risks of

floods in the monsoons and drought in the dry period. The ecological importance of natural forests for water conservation—both in forest areas and on agricultural lands was Chipko's central theme.

Large acres of the Ganges catchment have been deforested in recent years. Between 1976 and 1985, the average annual area deforested in Nepal was 84,000 hectares (ESCAP). In Uttar Pradesh 484,000 hectares of forests disappeared between 1975 and 1980 (NRSA, 1984).

Increased logging and deforestation caused by roads, dams and mines has systematically been identifled with increased floods, both because the disappearance of vegetative cover increases instant run-off and also because in high rainfall catchments, heavy showers can wash down unstable unprotected slopes. causing major landslides. Rainfall seasonability in the Ganges catchments aggravates flooding, since 95% of the total rainfall occurs in three to four months, and half of this falls in 20% of the total duration. Concentrated periods of rainfall, combined with steeper destabilized catchments lead to major disasters.

In 1970, a major flood occurred in the Alaknanda which is one of the tributaries of the Ganges. A landslide blocked one of the streams feeding the river, and when the dam burst, the water in the Alaknanda rose 15 metres above the Rishikesh-Badrinath road. Villages, roads and bridges were washed away. This event, which came to be known as the Alaknanda disaster, was a major lesson for the Himalayan communities of the links between deforestation and floods, and a critical event in the local mobilization against logging which collectively acquired the name of 'Chipko Movement'.

A second disaster took place in the Ganges catchment in 1978 when the Bhagirathi was blocked by a landslide at Kanodia Gad, forming a 24-km long lake which burst, flooding the Ganges basin all the way to Calcutta. The 1978 floods were the watershed which changed official thinking, redirecting it to the Chipko view that the main function

of the Himalayan forests was to manage water, not to yield timber. The ban on logging in 1981 came as a result of continued Chipko actions and new government enlightenment forced in large measure by the increase in floods in the country. From 19 million hectares in 1960, the flood-prone area in India increased to 59 million hectares in 1984, with many new areas becoming flood prone.

A threefold increase in floods cannot be treated as a 'natural' occurrence, even in the Ganges basin in which floods have always occurred. Yet the recently published report from the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) entitled Floods, Flood Plains and Environmental Myths, attempts to argue that the new pattern and magnitude of floods in the Ganges basin is 'natural'. While attempting to downgrade people's ecological knowledge as a myth, the report attempts to legitimize a new, recently emergent myth about the Himalaya Ganges system which says that the Ganges floods are natural disasters. not man-made disasters induced by maldevelopment in the form of commercial logging, road building, dam construction and mining.

L his myth about the 'naturalness' of floods in the Ganges basin is eroding the ecological consciousness that Chipko had built over the past two decades of links between forests and water systems on the one hand and links between river catchments and river basins on the other. We are being told that 'natural erosion processes in the Himalaya are so intense that they dwarf the changes caused by deforestation'. This statement from the most recent CSE report attempts to undo the Chipko message both in methodology and content.

It reverses its earlier methodology of collating people's views about the environment and synthesizing them as a countervailing force against myths propagated by dominant economic interests and the research institutions which serve them. Instead of building on people's knowledge, which it describes as merely anecdotal, the 'citizen's' report is now prescribing to people on the

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basis of studies done by scientists at international and national research institutions.

Instead of being called a 'citizen's report', the report should more honestly have been called the 'Hamilton report' because its central thesis is fully lifted from a paper written by Lawrence S. Hamilton entitled 'What are the Impacts of Himalayan Deforestation on the Ganges—Brahmaputra Lowlands and Delhi? Assumption and Facts' published in Mountain Research and Development (Vol. 7, No. 3, 1987).

Instead of drawing on a dialogue with ecology movements in the Himalaya, the report depends primarily on the publication of a socalled expert of the East-West Center in Hawaii to arrogantly put down local knowledge as a myth by peddling alienated and distant knowledge. This uni-directional discourse has never generated ecological knowledge. Drawing on Hamilton's knowledge from Hawaii, the CSE report imports anti-ecological claims. For example, Hamilton claims that logging and clear-felling in the Himalaya should not be described as 'deforestation'. Using temporate zone data, he claims that even in the tropical monsoonic climate of the Himalaya, clear-felling leads to increased water yields from catchments, even in dry seasons. There is much in the Hamilton paper that is debatable, including a notion of reductionist and linear causality.

**b**ut this is not a critique of Hamilton. It is a critique of CSE's report which uses Hamilton's thesis that destructive development in the Himalaya has no major environmental impact. Similar arguments are being used by Tehri dam 'experts' who define dam-induced seismicity into nature. The report falls in the conventional mould of foreign or anti-people expertise and advice which treats people's knowledge as myth and superstition. Instead of engaging in a dialogue with the people to evolve ecological knowledge and plans, it prescribes unilaterally. And the prescription is that people should learn to live with floods because floods are 'natural' in the Himalaya Ganges system.

This methodological reversal is linked to a reversal in content. The links between highlands and low-lands has been an essential part of the ecological understanding of floods. There is now an attempt to separate uplands from lowlands, and to define the large-scale devastation of the Himalaya by reckless logging, mining and dam building into 'natural' floods.

The difference between natural floods which are life-giving, and man-made floods which are life destroying is being obliterated. The people who suffer the new violence of floods are being told that living with these man-made floods is a 'truce with nature', when it is actually a truce with the environmental destruction of the river as an integrated ecosystem. On this logic people in Garhwal should accept Tehri dam as a 'truce with nature' since the region is in any case prone to earthquakes and dam-induced earthquakes dwarf in comparison. This precisely is the argument Tehri dam 'experts' are using, and its logic is the same as the CSE's logic borrowed from Hamilton.

ther differences are being obliterated too. Phenomena that occur above the tree line in the glacial zone are being used as an argument to break the ecological link between natural forests and hydrological stability in Himalayan catchments that receive monsoon water rather than snow. The fact that the Himalaya are geologically young makes them prone to natural erosion, and the seasonal nature of the monsoons has made floods a natural phenomena in the Gangetic basin. These conditions imply that small disturbances, instead of being negligible, can trigger major instability.

The fragility of the Himalaya, and the monsoonic nature of rainfall in the region is, in fact, reason to take deforestation, dam building and environmental degradation, more, rather than less, seriously. The linear causality and mechanistic thinking of Hamilton and CSE fail to grasp the ecological context of the explanation of disasters in the Himalaya. The fact that floods have naturally occurred is not a reason to ignore

floods that are created by thoughtlessness and indifference to ecological vulnerability of the Himalaya. The magnitude and quality of erosion and floods has changed dramatically due to deforestation, road building, dam building and mining in the mountain catchments. With good vegetation, the floods are more spread out and manageable. Without vegetation and with large dams, there is more instant run off, higher peak flow and shorter period over which the floods set in. Sand and debris, rather than silt, is carried down the river.

hese changing patterns cannot be wished away as 'natural'. Scientists have failed to adequately study the complex processes at play in Himalayan ecosystems. Local village communities have lived with them. To declare people's knowledge of ecological processes a 'myth' (not in the sense of metaphor but in the sense of falsehood) and to erect new myths as 'scientific' certainty on the basis of fragments of fragmented and imported scientific knowledge is an old strategy of domination by experts. Not being based on a dialogue, the third CSE report cannot be called a 'citizens report on the environment'. It is neither participatory, nor ecological.

#### П

The World Bank, over the past four decades, has played a major role in environmental destruction in the Third World. Most of the 23 billion dollars that it lends annually goes to destroy land, rivers, forests, biodiversity and the atmosphere through financing dams, mono-cultures and superthermal power plants. Now the agency which has been least able to internalize ecological concern and participatory decision-making into its operations is attempting to become the global environment ministry, while keeping its anti-ecological financial calculus and anti-democratic structure intact.

The global environment facility (GEF) is the institution managed and promoted by the World Bank with the confidence that it will be able to manage the large sums of money for environmental protection that are expected to be generated by the

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UNCED process and the conventions on climate and biodiversity.

The GEF has not emerged from a dialogue - with nature or people. It has not even emerged from a dialogue between states. It was undemocratically set up on the basis of a unilateral decision emerging from the World Bank and reflecting the interests of the G-7 countries. Its very birth excluded the interests of the south. A global environment facility was proposed by the French representative in September 1989 at a meeting of the Development Committee—a joint Word Bank-IMF ministerial advisory group. Germany put forward a similar proposal. Fourteen months later, in November 1990, the GEF was established and at the end of 1991. the funds available to it totalled 1.3 billion dollars.

The GEF is supposed to be administered through informal working arrangements between the UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank. However, since the World Bank acts as the repository of the funds, it makes the decisions. UNEP's Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel which is supposed to provide environmental guidance to the GEF process gets inadequate information and inadequate time to make significant contributions. Affected communities are, of course, never consulted.

The GEF as structured has distorted the environmental agenda in a number of ways. The first distortion is in the choice of issues that will fit into the category of 'global environmental problem'. The facility's work falls into four main areas: to reduce global warming, to protect international water, to preserve biological diversity, and to prevent further depletion of the stratospheric ozone layer. These alone are being treated as global environmental problems, the rest are being relegated to the status of 'local' issues.

There are three possible criteria of demarcation for identifying global environmental issues:

(i) Global problems are those that occur on a worldwide scale, and are those local problems which need to be addressed everywhere. These

would include problems of desertification, deforestation, soil loss and degradation, water scarcity, pollution and toxic hazards. This criteria is clearly not the one being used since none of the world-scale problems find their place in GEF. Further, since CFC use which causes ozone depletion is not a worldwide phenomenon but is localized to the industrialized world, this would not enter into the GEF agenda on this criteria.

(ii) Global problems are those arising from trans-boundary movement of pollutants, and hence need global regulation. Although they might have local origins, they have global impact through the mobility of the resource, as for example, pollution of international waters or the atmosphere. However, on this criterion, biodiversity would not be included since plant genetic resources are not mobile in themselves; they are moved around by people. Tropical plants and genes have been freely taken by the northern countries to make profits and create monopoly control on products and commodities.

(ttt) The third criterion for identifying global environmental problems is political and economic. Biodiversity appears as a global issue in this framework. On this definition, global environmental problems are those which global powers can use to preserve and enhance their control over the Third World.

At a recent meeting of the GEF in Geneva on 2 and 3 December 1991, the Chairman of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee, Robert Watson of NASA admitted that the global issues had been clearly identified on a political and not a scientific basis. The exclusion of other concerns from the global agenda is artificial since, for example, the nuclear industry and chemical industry are globally operating industries, and the problems—they generate in every local situation are related to their global reach.

The way 'global environmental problems' have been constructed hides the role and responsibility of the globalizing local in the destruction of the environment which supports the subjugated locals. The

construction becomes a political tool to free the dominant destructive forces operating worldwide of all responsibility, and to shift the blame and responsibility of all destruction to the communities that have no global reach. The political roots of the decision-making process, which pretends to be based on scientific criteria, close the larger possibilities of dialogue about the world's environmental problems and the search for solutions by the world community.

If GEF had been created through a dialogue with ecology movements everywhere, global problems would have been identified on the basis of the first criterion, as those that occur worldwide as a result of economic activities based on the logic of the market rather than the logic of the earth and its diverse ecosystems. Such problems exist in the industrialized world as well as in the developing world. However, the politics of the GEF has ensured that the environmental discourse shuts its eyes to the problems of the North, and focuses exclusively on the South. Instead of restructuring the global economy and transnational corporations and the global financial institutions like the World Bank, a global environmental faci-lity aims at 'helping developing countries to contribute towards solving global environmental prob-lems. The poor, in other words, should carry the environmental burdens for the rich while the rich continue with business as usual.

This prejudiced view of the global environment will fail to find environmental solutions for both the North and the South. It will fail to make ecological corrections in the North because that is precisely what is being avoided by GEF and UNCED. It will fail to make ecological corrections in the South because 70% of GEF projects are mere tag-ons to the environmentally destructive projects of the World Bank: for example, the Arun Valley Project in Nepal that is financed by the World Bank. The biodiversity project for Nepal in the GEF portfolio is not a project for protecting biodiversity in the Arun Valley catchment, but an aim 'to support the implementation of the Arun hydro-project and its

access road investment'. This essentially involves biodiversity destruction. The participatory process is not a dialogue with local communities but the involvement of an American NGO.

In the case of India, the World Bank is giving billions for superthermal power projects at Bokaro, Trombay, Kothagudem, Singrauli, Korba, Ramagundam, Farakha, Chandrapur, Talcher, and so on. It is thus contributing through its regular investments to the build-up of greenhouse gases. Through GEF it then proposes to give small amounts for windmills and solar panels to ameliorate the green house effect without changing its normal investments in the energy sector. Further, since most GHF projects are linked to existing World Bank projects, clauses of secrecy operate, preventing dialogue and free access to information.

The non-democratic structure of decision-making is thus being perpetuated in the GHF. The World Bank decisions are dictated by voting weighted by control over dollars. Unlike the UN system, this multilateral agency is not based on one-country one-vote. And neither UN nor World Bank decisions are based on dialogue with communities whose lives and resources their projects destroy.

There is currently a deep North-South clash of interest over the decision-making in GEF. The G-77 countries want a UN-style onecountry one-vote democracy. The G-7 countries on the other hand want a shareholder basis of decision-making. As an internal memo of the World Bank on institutional arrangements for GBF has stated: 'More thought will need to be devoted to arranging the marriage between the political imperatives of a "democractic" political UN-style body with the fiduciary imperative of shareholders wishing to exert an influence in direct relationship to their contribution.'

However, in the ecological domain, we are all shareholders in the life of this planet. The real 'donors' in the environmental perspective are those whose lives and land have

been sacrificed for the project of development and the project to protect the 'global environment'. They must be included in a dialogue about the earth's future.

The Third World countries have been singing a chorus of 'new and additional sources of funding at UNCED for addressing environmental problems. However, global environmental issues cannot be simply addressed by the transfer of relatively small GEF funds from North to South at a time when repayment funds of 50 billion dollars are being transferred South to North. Additional sources of funds for the environment can be generated by keeping a percentage of debt repayment within the Third World for 'green' issues. This will simultaneously reduce the debt burden and the authoritarian trends in financial transfers.

As the experience with the Montreal Fund has shown, the G-7 countries have made clear that if they give money, they must have full control. No funds will be forthcoming if the demand for equal participation is maintained. The Third World can either have funds or democracy, not both. If the South is successful in building democratic structures, it will get no funds. If it is successful in receiving funds, it should forget democracy. The closeddoor decision-making of the GEF in the World Bank, is based neither on ecology nor democracy. It represents an absurd situation of the global planning ministry, the finance ministry, the industry ministry, the environment ministry all being in one, with no checks and balances. and no system of accountability. Because of this lack of accountability, NGOs have called for a moratorium on disbursement of GBF funds and have indicated that the World Bank is an inappropriate agency for administering environ-mental funds.

The absence of democracy in international institutions destroy all conditions for seriously addressing global environmental problems. Ecological recovery can only be achieved through the deepening and globalizing of democracy as dialogue between different yet equal partners.

### Books

#### ANATOMY OF A CONFRONTATION: The Babri

Masjid-Ramjanmabhoomi Issue edited by Sarvepalli Gopal. Viking (Penguin India), 1991.

'THE Ramjanmabhoomi issue, the demand by a militant section of Hindu opinion for the demolishing of a mosque in Ayodhya and the building of a temple to Rama on that site, brings into sharper focus than at any time since 1941, a sickness which free India has not been able to shake off and demands reappraisal of many basic features of our society.' So writes S. Gopal, in his introduction to a collection of essays by well-known scholars, all purporting to throw fresh light on this vexing and troublesome controversy.

Few of us, even a decade back, could have imagined that a dilapidated, semi-abandoned mosque in the temple town of Ayodhya, could be converted into a key symbol around which the Hindu-Muslim relations are being redefined, definitely in north India, but possibly elsewhere too. From 1986 onwards, when the gates of the disputed complex were thrown open for Hindu worship, the ensuing mobilisation/agitation for 'the liberation of the janmasthan' has not just hamstrung the politics of the country, directly contributed to the fall of at least one central government, or propelled the BJP to a situation wherein it controls 4 state governments in addition to having over 120 members in Parliament, but has contributed to riots/confrontations that have claimed hundreds of lives of ordinary citizens. Worse, the controversy shows no signs of flagging

out, 'swallowed up', as one commentator claims, 'by mother India'.

Why? Is all this a reflection of the intrinsic power of this issue, or is it that times have so changed that what could earlier be dismissed as insignificant can today acquire an explosive potential? Why have the militant Hindu social and political organisations—the VHP, RSS, Bajrang Dal, BJP et aldecided to throw their hat in the 'Rama ring', and what are the reasons for their 'success'? Equally, why has this issue resulted in a pan-Indian Muslim mobilisation? The questions are not just political, for the communitarian/communal mobilisations on the mandir-masjid issue are sharply re-defining the basic practice and constructions of at least the Hindu faith—a tendency with far-reaching religious and secular implications.

To the lay citizen, irrespective of where his/her sympathies lie, these and other questions have caused a deep anguish. Not only do we want to understand the nature of this confrontation, the different constructions parading as truth, but more important, to also search for clues to diffuse if not transcend the conflict. In this sense the load of expectations that any book on this complex of issues has to carry is unenviable.

To the reading public, Professor S. Gopal and his associates are not unknown entities. From their earlier 'Communalism and the Writing of Indian History', their role in the planning and preparation of the NCERT textbooks, their earlier pamphlet on the Ramjanmabhoomi issue, to their frequent interventions in the media—this group has been at the intellectual centre of the secularist assault on the Hindu position. As such, and not just to the protagonists on the 'other side', they come through as partisan, at least partly because many of them have taken on the mantle of 'protecting the Muslim interests' via upholding the Babri Masjid Action Committee positions. In this sense, this book too, like the veritable avalanche of other books, pamphlets, articles, even films on this question, tells us more about the 'anatomy of self-justification' than of the confrontation.

Before we go on to analysing the crucial absences or elements of silence in this collection, it will be useful to outline the bare elements of the authors' general argument. Baldly stated, this collection is a trenchant critique of the pro-mandir position. Through a series of illuminating and scholarly essays, it is argued that the mandir-masjid conflict is not located in antiquity, but is the direct creation of British colonialist divide and rule policy in the mid-19th century.

What were at best 'local rumours' about the destruction of an age-old Rama temple to construct the Babri mosque were given official credence in the records, thereby confounding all future attempts at resolution. In 1855, the adjoining Hanumangarhi

temple (itself built on a plot of land granted by the Avadhi Nawab) was the focus of a Muslim attack, the claim being that the temple had been constructed by destroying an earlier mosque. The attack was successfully repulsed. In 1857, following the defeat of the anti-British revolt, the Mahant of Hanumangarhi took over a part of the Babri mosque compound and built a chabutara, claiming the site as holy and associated with Rama's birth. This 'counter myth', by retaining a part of the Muslim argument about Hanumangarhi and inverting the claim, became the first recorded instance of a contestation over the masjid. The matter was taken to the British, who in 1859 constructed a fence to separate the places of worship of the Hindus and Muslims. From then onwards, periodic legal complaints were registered about the proprietorship of the land on which the masjid stands, leading sometimes to violent conflict.

Thus the contributors to this volume argue that the very genesis of this controversy is rooted in untruth. The subsequent developments—periodic riots over the masjid; the miraculous appearance of the statues of Ram Lalla in 1949; the role of the local politicians and district administration; the proclamation of the premises as a disputed area and the locking up of the gates of the complex; the vacation of the earlier stay in 1986 and the granting of permission for public worship—all these are too well known to bear repetition. What is however less known is the role of the U.P. Chief Minister Vallabh Pant, who notwithstanding exhortations to act firmly by both Nehru and Patel, prevaricated, ostensibly for electoral-political considerations. For some reason (weak commitment to secularism?) Nehru too did not make it into an issue, a folly for which we all are now paying.

So what is all the current debate on history and archaeology all about? Did Babur ever go to Ayodhya; did an earlier building/temple dedicated to Rama ever exist at the contested site; Ayodhya's vintage—whether it existed at the time of Rama or even Vikramaditya; the historicity of Rama or his link with the current Ayodhya—how relevant are they? Why can't the issue be resolved by a rigorous examination of the property records, with the judgement of the courts being binding on all concerned parties?

Of all the essays in this book, it is only Neeladri Bhattacharya who in his 'Myth, History and the Politics of Ramjanmabhoomi' comes somewhat close to understanding the possibilities encoded in this symbol to appropriate many different concerns, both secular-political and of faith, particularly how through this one battle the terms of discourse on many issues are being sought to be altered decisively. He sees the current battle over the disputed complex as one in a longstanding concern of the forces of Hindu nationalism to give a specific shape to the country. The elevation of Ramayana as a master text with a reconstructed Rama as a central



### Institute of Rural Management Anand

### Invitation for Collaboration on a Research Programme on Management of Rural Co-operatives

IRMA has initiated an year-long programme of research in Management of Rural Co-operatives. The research programme will culminate into a symposium during 7-11 December, 1992 at the IRMA campus in Anand. Fourteen workshops are planned; each will be co-ordinated by specific IRMA faculty members as follows:

### Theme title

- 1. Design and Strategic Management of Rural Co-operatives
- 2. State and Rural Co-operatives in India
- Design and Operation of Political Processes in Rural Co-operatives
- 4. Logistics and Quality Control in Commodity Producers'
   Co-operatives
- 5. Co-operative Marketing of Rural Produce
- 6. Accounting, Financial Planning & Control in Rural Co-operatives
- 7. Design and Performance of Federation Co-operatives
- 8. Economic Theory of Co-operative Firm
- 9. Co-operatives in Natural Resource Management
- 10. Organisational Behaviour Issues in Rural Co-operatives
- 11. Systems Design and Applications in Rural Co-operatives
- 12. Business Planning Processes & Practices in Agricultural Co-operatives
- 13. Member-control in Co-operatives: Practice, Pattern & Issues
- 14. Co-operative Education & Co-operative Development

#### Workshop Co-ordinator/s

Pankaj S Jain

S J Phansalkar & Akhileshwar Pathak

Vikash Pandoy & Dobi Prasad Mishra

R Rajagopalan

L K Vaswani

R C Sekhar, Rajesh Agrawal, Michael Johnson & V G Sridharan

Tushaar Shah

R Srinivasan

Katar Singh & Vishwa Ballabh

C Balaji & Prathap Roddy

Ved Prakash Gulati

M S Sriram

Ajay Dubey

S Subramaniam & Ajit Kanitkar

IRMA invites researchers/institutions interested in social, organisational and managerial research to collaborate with its faculty in field research in any of the workshops registered above. The Institute has resources to provide small research grants of up to Rs. 20,000 to interested collaborators against brief proposals. Researchers interested in such collaboration may write directly to the respective workshop directors at Institute of Rural Management, Post Box No. 60, Anand 388 001, Gujarat, India.



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icon, permits a consolidation of a Hindu community transcending barriers of caste and sect. The mythology helps provide ancient legitimacy, the epic form permitting a delineation of the forces of good and evil. The invocation of 'historical facts' provides a cementing force for the modern Indian. Even more, it helps re-articulate Hinduism, not as a civilizational congerie of different, even conflicting beliefs, but as a modern religion which can lay the ground for a durable cultural basis of nationalism.

Similarly Romila Thapar's essay on the dozens of versions of Ramayana, both as an epic and as local performing art form, which have co-existed for centuries, and the steady displacement/marginalisation of these versions by Valmiki and Tulsi's Ramayana (and now the Ramananda Sagar TV version)—in the process converting a maha-kavya to a holy text, fits in well with the thesis of an invented, syndicated Hinduism. Where both these contributions miss the mark is in seeing the 'Hindu' effort, even as spearheaded by BIP-VHP et al, as medieval, revivalist, even fundamentalist, as if invoking a secular and rationalist counter argument will solve the problem.

The power of this particular conflagration lies precisely in its specific mix of many issues—both religious and secular-political. It has as much to do with fights over different versions of Ramayana and a new construction of Ram within Hinduism with the concomitant linkage to Ayodhya, as it has with the popular understanding of the Muslim community and the 'secular' practice of various political parties as also the Indian state. That is why the BJP led coalition has consistently shifted the terms of discourse, sometimes stressing the religious orientation by focussing on 'Hindu sensitivity and hurt', sometimes the true/positive secularism vs. pseudo secularism, and sometimes the purely politico-cultural terms as defining the basis for Indian nationhood.

It needs to be analysed why the 'movement for the liberation of Rama's janmasthan' failed in 1949 but has acquired such potency now. Also why is it that the pro-mandir forces did not make it their central plank earlier. To understand this 'success' we need to not only go behind the strategic efforts of the VHP-BIP combine, but also analyse the weakening hold of secularist imagination and politics More than anything else, it is the bankruptcy of the self-seeking politics of the ostensibly secular parties, particularly the Congress but also the NF-LF front, that is responsible for the current impasse. The failure to usher in a uniform personal law, the constant playing of the 'minority' card in electoral calculus, the caving in on the Shah Bano affair, the handling of the Mandal agitation, and in particular Mulayam Singh Yadav's heavy handed efforts at blocking the kar-seva so strongly applauded by our intelligentsia—all these helped push the ordinary believing Hindu—the women, the backward castes, even sections of the tribals—into the agitation. Few of us also realise the hardening of attitude created by appeals to boycott the Republic Day, by the likes of Syed Shahabuddin. None of this is analysed in the book under review.

That is why a simple reiteration of the virtues of secularism, of providing a detailed analysis of the legal issues, of singing praises to our composite culture, or of appealing to the state to act firmly and defeat the evil machinations of the pro-mandir combine cut little ice today. Even worse, arguments about the 'non-existence' of Rama or that the Ayodhya of Valmiki is not the Ayodhya of today (history vs myth); that any temple destruction during the medieval period has less to do with Islam and more with the secular and material considerations of the rulers; that the Hindu record of intolerance matches that of Islam; or that any view in support of the Ram Mandir is only expressive of Hindu communalism—only demonstrates that whatever might be the Gopal et al claims to 'historical truth', they understand little about the shaping of the public mind. Rarely have issues of faith and belief been effectively countered by recourse to history, a point that the authors' concede but then proceed to sidetrack if not ignore.

There is, no matter how uncomfortable the prospect, no running away from the necessity of frontally tackling what is termed the 'Muslim question' in the country. Without saner Muslim voices, which are repeatedly let down as we have more recently seen in the Rushdie and Jamia affairs, being given greater prominence, it will be difficult to counter the Hindu nationalist shift so evident at least in the country's middle classes. As long as our mainstream political parties continue to treat the Muslim community as a vote bank and continue to simplistically characterize the BJP/RSS as the spearheaders of Hindu obscurantism, reasoned discussion on issues such as Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid will remain impossible.

Towards this end, all of us need to rethink the intrinsic merit and efficacy of decultured, statist, secular values that are promoted as the ruling orthodoxy. To continue to treat religion and faith as mere superstition and false consciousness is a fundamental misreading of history. Biforts at delegitimising lived faith invariably breed not just reaction, but tend to displace 'religion as faith' by 'religion as ideology', contributing in its wake to the differential power of the Imams and the Shankaracharyas in matters both of faith and secular politics.

It is indeed fortunate for all of us that having come into power in U.P., the BJP government has been trapped by its created Frankenstein and conflicts have broken out between the different constituents of the pro-mandir coalition. With the 'movement' now devouring the many little faiths/ temples in Ayodhya itself, the Hindu faithful have started questioning the legitimacy of the Rss/VHP/BJP as genuine worshippers of Ram It is through these processes of erosion that the BJP is losing a large part of its appeal, that had earlier contributed to the success of the Ram Shila Pujan or even the Advani rath-yatra.

Professor S. Gopal and his colleagues, their scholarship and concern notwithstanding, miss out on many of these tendencies. That is why this book is unlikely to contribute to a questioning by the believing Hindu of the pro-mandir mythology constructed by the VHP et al ideologues. Worse, it may well be dismissed as yet another defence of the politically dominant Muslim position. As such, it provides no meaningful space for dialogue, without which there can be no end to confrontation.

Harsh Sethi

Communatism in India: History, Politics and Culture edited by K.N. Panikkar. Manohar Publishers, N. Delhi, 1991.

THE assault on Rodney King in America may have brought judicial impartiality under question. But those supporting the black bashing did not seek the legitimacy of history in defence of white cops. The situation in India is different. More than isolated cases, organised communal violence is taking place all over the country and state power has either failed or exhibited lack of will to contain it. At times, it has even become party to its escalation. In fact, the Ram Janambhumi-Babri Masjid dispute and politicization of the dispute became a symbol of communal mobilization and divided the society both on communal and political lines. And worse, communalists are using Indian history in its defence.

This resurgence of communalism which resulted in a series of communal riots in the country also became subject of sociological and academic postmortem specially during the post 1990 period. Cause and effect were analysed in seminars and write-ups. There was unity in view and concern to the problem—that it militated against the foundations of Indian society and questioned the principles on which the political, social and cultural institutions and practices were nurtured during the anti-colonial struggle which became the legacy of free India.

K.N. Panikkar, editor of the book which includes papers presented in seminars organized by the Social Scientist in March 1990, a few months after the Congress government at the centre and Uttar Pradesh allowed the laying of the Ram temple foundation at the disputed site of Ayodhya, points to deliberate distortions in Indian history to suit communal politics. Communalism, according to him, draws sustenance from history, from its interpretation and selective appropriation. 'It seeks to construct an imagined past in order to legitimize its view of the present'.

He also draws parallels in the motives of early British historians like James Mill, author of the History of British India and the present day 'Hindu communalists' who justify periodization of history with the change of dynasty as the yardstick for it. Mill

divided history into Hindu, Muslim and the British period where the other single dividing factor was religion practised by the rulers. Distorting it further, the Hindu communalists have today tried to project the Hindu period as the 'golden age', and the medieval or Muslim period as the 'age of decadence' and the modern one as the 'age of revival'. Demolition of the mosque and construction of the temple are moves to get back to that golden age.

The BJP's involvement in the movement for restoration of Ram, Krishna and Shiva temples in Ayodhya, Mathura and Varanasi has a two-pronged motive -to bind Hindu society with the communal thread of solidarity and to project the 'Muslims' (destroyers of their temples) as the ones who had encouraged vandalism against the Hindu shrines and therefore are still the enemies to fight against. The author holds the view that destruction of these temples by the Muslim rulers was more of a political act during that period basically to destroy the nexus between hostile elements. For instance, the nexus between Sufi rebels and the Pandits worried Aurangzeb and the destruction of the temple at Varanasi was aimed at smashing or terrorising this nexus. Moreover, the destruction of places of worship that took place in Latin America during the Spanish conquest and in Central Asia was, more than anything else, a symbol of 'assertion of power'.

But subsequently, communalism became an integral part of Indian politics and the weakness and inadequacy of secularism practised during the anticolonial struggle gave birth to further aberrations. Two sets of political parties—one organised around communal ideologies and goals (like the Muslim League/Hindu Mahasabha), BJP, Akali Dal etc., and the other using communalism for political mobilisation (almost all the parties except the left fall in this category).

The BJP expects that the creation of Hindu consciousness would open up the road to power and its movement for restoration of the temple is part of the quest for power. Congress governments of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi have at times supported their move or tried to identify with them giving official legitimacy to the majority communalism. The association of the rulers with the communalists has thus weakened the resistance to communalism and bestowed legitimacy to communal politics. And because of this what is at stake today is democracy, secularism, rule of law and nationalism.

Eminent historian Romila Thapar pleads for effectively countering the abuse of history where anti-Muslim personalities like Rana Pratap, Shivaji and Guru Govind Singh are projected as national heroes while people like Akbar and Ashoka are ignored. Taking a rigidly anti-communal stance, Thapar advocates that the quest for avenge exhibited by the Hindu fundamentalists seeking to rebuild a temple by destroying the mosque should be

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defeated and (acts of the past) should be confined to the past. And communal ideology is antithetical to radical and liberal action and thought. The VHP movement, using the facade of religion, is acting with the intention of stalling any radical reforms in the society. It will have the far reaching consequence of criminalizing society. This, in turn, will mean more violence and more riots.

Mushirul Hasan might have regretted his remarks on the ban on Satanic Verses under pressure from interested political quarters and hostile students but he is quite outspoken against the Muslim leaders—dead or alive—for having ignored Muslim commoners during the critical phase of transition, leaving them at the mercy of secular leader like Nehru. And the situation today in the absence of such leaders is predictable. Dipankar Gupta's paper seeks to analyse the consequence of partition on the basis of religion and the violence preceding it.

In the analysis of Professor Bipan Chandra, the incidence of communal violence is the result of the existence and sustenance of a communal ideology. Communal ideology got its life elixir from history written in the 1830s and then in more restructured ways in the 1870s and 1830s. With such ideology getting deep rooted and legitimized, it resulted in the outbreak of communal violence in the 1920s. He suggests that communal violence needs immediate attention of the state power to contain it but it requires a committed struggle to defeat the communal ideology. In their own interest, communal parties once in power may not incite violence but the ideology will continue to get more legitimacy. A growth of majority communalism, fears Chandra, might even lead to fascism, something that the minority communalism cannot cause. Nevertheless, a sustained campaign against both forms of communalism is required.

The role played by the media, over exposure given to communal riots with distorted versions, serialization of the Ramayan and Mahabharat, the role of the state like in the Shahbano case have also promoted communalism.

The book suggests necessary pre-requisites for resisting communalism and enlarging the secular space with an appeal to citizens, government(s) and the communal parties. But Murli Manohar Joshi launched his version of Advani's Ekta Yatra and the government was even more cooperative than before.

Seminarist

BOUNDARIES AND IDENTITIES: Muslims,
Work and Status in Aligarh by E.A. Mann. Sage
Publications, New Delhi, 1992.

TO understand the nature of Indian Muslim identity in the present day context E.A. Mann

examines the qusbah town of Aligarh as a specific cultural context. The question of identity has been closely tied to three major issues—those of styles of occupation, status differences and being a Muslim in India. The book is an attempt at studying how identity changes meaning in the context of class and status distinctions. The claim made by certain scholars that Muslim societies have tended towards a high Islamic tradition has been found to be untrue in the case of Uttar Pradesh. Her study reveals that boundaries other than those based on Islam have persisted, creating identities based on class and status which very often, in her opinion, become more important than Islam, especially on a day to day basis.

The author has tried to explore how such boundaries are defined and maintained by its members. Mann has analyzed the contradictions among Muslims on what constitutes the sources of identity for the community and how it is expressed. According to her though Muslims acknowledge the existence of a primary religious identity in Islam—there is a wide range of reaction and opinion concerning the source of identity and its expression.

The term identity has been defined by the author as 'perception of self in relation to other', and this she examines through the importance attached to four social institutions—religion, kinship group, economic class and status group.

In the opinion of the author the contradictions among the Muslims on what constitutes sources of solidarity for the community are due to the internal social distinctions within the community. This is contradictory to the assertion that ideology of Islam is paramount at all times for all people. To substantiate her point Mann examines the social distinctions based on the concepts of elite, baradariand zat which for her are the 'three single most important expressions of identity among Aligarh Muslims'.

Mann goes on to analyze how these expressions of identity acquire meaning and the ways by which these boundaries are maintained. She goes into details of marriage patterns to explain how baradari boundaries are maintained. Whereas marriage regulates the internal structure of a baradari, the external boundaries are consolidated by residential localities, and by identifying certain behaviour patterns with a particular baradari etcetera. These boundaries are however getting relaxed and are no longer so rigid—the reasons being the movement of populations, competition in industrial development, breakdown of exclusive residential localities and also because of social movements like Tabligh-i-Jama'at which tries to remove attitudes and practices that perpetuate a social hierarchy—and emphasize the oneness of Muslims in India instead.

Emphasizing Islam as a unifying factor for Aligarh Muslims becomes problematic as there seems to be little consensus over the meanings attached to Islam and its role as a model for life among them. For Aligarh Muslims 'religion is more frequently used as a tool to assert forms of identity, but does not seem to constitute an identity in its own right except where that identity has become marginalised and dangerous, as in communal confrontation.'

Mann sees a link between the concept of work and occupation with the notions of identities based on class, status category (elite and non-elite) and status group (baradari). The position taken by Gellner where he suggests that modern industrialization influences patterns of work creating egalitarianism, which is essential to religious like Islam, which in turn leads to renewal of religious values and a 'rehomogenisation', of Muslims under an Islamic identity, are found by her not to be relevant for Muslims in Aligarh.

An interesting analysis which she offers in her book are the reasons given for baradari identity remaining so important for the Muslims of Aligarh. In contrast to high status Muslims the low status groups according to her are consolidated because of the practice of endogamy. Secondly, because of zat Muslims' refusal to consider marriage alliances with those of baradari Muslims, the low status baradari 'prefer to aim their collective social consciences at their own members'. And more important is the fact that the baradari has increasingly become politicized as a voting block.

In this study of essentially the non-elite, the author shows how name changing is resorted to by many baradaries in a desire to change their social status and promote a new corporate identity for themselves. This she feels is an attempt by them to escape the pejorative implications attached to certain occupations, with indigenous conversions and influences of Hindu castes.

Towards the end of her discussion, Mann examines the relevance of being a Muslim in Aligarh in a wider sense. Despite the heterogenous character of the Muslims of Aligarh—a common sense of being a Muslim still persists, which cuts across baradaries, class and elite boundaries. This is however, not vested in high Islamic tradition and the rhetoric of Islamic unity is compromised in daily social encounters.

This awareness of a Muslim identity according to Mann is expressed both individually and collectively through rituals, festivals and charity. Its external manifestation takes place through contrasts and confrontations with other religious communities. The author however clarifies that the 'expression of collectivity are often refuges of the persecuted'. According to her it is only when Muslims feel persecuted or repressed that the relevance of hadith, shariah and sunnat become strong; and despite Islam's egalitarian message for the underdog and its ritual display on Friday and Eid namaz, the confus-

ing ambivalence of Muslims themselves in their social and economic circumstances provides a counter-current against a solidarity under an Islamic banner. This contradiction is displayed by the empirical reality of baradari and elites which Mann feels has nothing to do with meritocracy.

The issues dealt with in this book are particularly of contemporary interest, and have a great deal to contribute to our understanding of the Muslim social structure in India. The traditional distinction among Indian Muslims—the Ashraf and Ajlaf are inadequate according to her to describe the prevailing social distinctions and therefore she has delineated further distinctions based on elite, baradari and zat. The author's new perspective on the question of Muslim identity is quite revealing. Her stand that the definition and solidarity among Aligarh Muslims is not only a desire to distinguish themselves in relation to non-Muslims but also amongst Muslims themselves—from those they claim oppressed and misrepresented them in the past i.e. the Muslim olito.

Her important observation that boundaries other than Islam have persisted and those which affect them on a daily basis acquire more salience should go a long way in de-mythifying the notion that Muslims are a homogenous lot and the growth of Muslim fundamentalism in India is a result of developments in other Islamic countries.

However, I have a problem with Mann trying to compare her study with some scholars (viz Robinson, 1983) who claim that Muslim societies have tended to move towards a high Islamic tradition. The claim made by these scholars has relevance as they have looked at Indian Muslims vis-a-vis the non-Muslim (particularly the Hindus) in a purely historical context. Mann has looked at the Muslims of Aligarh in relation to each other (particularly the elite/non-elite dichotomy) and has briefly touched upon the distinction between Muslims and Hindus. Besides, Mann's work is a contemporary analysis, showing the historical forces that played a part in Muslims moving 'towards an Islamic tradition'. Hence, Robinson's conclusions are not compatible with to those of Mann.

The author's deep understanding of her subject of study and the extensive research undertaken is also reflected through the many maps, figures and footnotes that she has provided. But she seems to have made an error in explaining the term Unani medicine (in a footnote) as 'associated with Muslims and traditional Islamic healing arts'. This is a typical stereotyped definition. The association of Unani medicine with Muslims is similiar to the association of Urdu with Muslims. Unani medicine originated in Greece and was further developed by the Arabs. It was introduced into India during the medieval period.

In the final analysis this book makes interesting reading and has an easy style, free from jargon. The

merit of the book would have been further enhanced if Mann had touched upon the implications of her study on the future of the society. However there is no doubt that the book provides a wide-ranging, interesting and intellectually stimulating analysis of contemporary Muslim social structure.

Azra Razzack

### ETHNICITY, CASTE AND PEOPLE edited by K.S. Singh. Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1992.

WE live in troubled times. And we see the dream we once celebrated collapsing before our own eyes—the dream of the potency of modernization, its emancipatory reason, its ability to make us universal, not limited to primordial loyalties like caste, ethnicity, language and religion. Instead, despite the rapid spread of the instruments of modernization, we see man's increasing restlessness, his desperate urge to reaffirm himself in what cultural anthropologists would call the stuff of one's culture: one's community having its visible distinctiveness, its own mythologies, God, religion, rituals.

In other words, the social reality we experience is terribly complex: it refuses to be explained by the universal project of modernization. Local, regional, ethnic struggles assert forcefully that there are limits to the homogenizing tendencies inherent in the language of a modern, secular, nation-state. As a matter of fact, we live in a world that provokes us all the time to rethink the fate of a centralized nation-state, its discourses on order and unity or the art of living one needs to evolve in order to cope with the plurality of cultures, reasons, life-styles.

It is in this context that the book under review acquires its relevance. The job that K.S. Singh has done by editing a book of this kind is indeed laudable. Because with its 36 essays presented at the two joint Indo-Soviet seminars on ethnicity held in Calcutta and Leningrad in 1990, the book does succeed in sensitizing us to a great civilizational problem: how to evolve a truly democratic, participatory, tolerant, harmonic order amidst diversity and multiplicity of visions.

A look at India and the Soviet Union (yes, it was existing at the time of writing the book), as a careful reader would not fail to conceive, becomes all the more relevant because, as the unitary vision of order inherent in these two great historical experiments collapses, one sees the ultimate return of man as what he is: not an 'Indian' or a 'socialist', but a man having an identity that refuses to forget the history of its ethnicity, its caste, its language, its religion, its regional-cultural distinctiveness. As a result, reading this book is also a reminder; perhaps it prepares us to accept the inevitable: all that is local, regional, traditional can no longer be discarded; progress must redefine itself in the new context of changing reality.

As one begins to read the book and finally concentrates on its essays, there are primarily two ideas that strike one immediately. First, as it becomes clear from K.S. Singh's essay 'Ethnography, Caste, Ethnicity in India', what is necessary to remember is not just a conceptual elaboration of caste, ethnicity or nationality but 'the task of political management of a large plural society such as ours'. And it is the reawakening of this challenging task that leads Singh to examine the dynamics of tribal politics in India, the way it is altering its character from 'ethnicity to regionalism'.

The fact is that, as A.C. Bhagabati suggests in his essay, 'ethno-cultural identity has been an important resource for mobilizing the people in socio-political spheres'. And perhaps this is more true after Independence. Because a 'pan-Indian national umbrella' which, for example, Surendra Gopal, another contributor, would see emerging at the time of our collective fight against colonialism, has now ceased to exist. A look at the 'post-1947 ethnic scenario', to quote Gopal once again, suggests how 'regional identities have become an important part of the political milieu'. And this is something that ought to be understood, not condemned.

That is why, perhaps, one sees a refreshingly different language in the beautifully written essay 'Ethnic Revivalism: Problems in the Indian Union' by Barun De and Suranjan Das. The authors, it seems, refuse to give their consent to the 'integrationist' response of the Indian state to ethnic revivalism. They do not want to forget the 'pluralistic elements in Indian culture' and therefore, argue assertively that 'the democratic necessity now is to stress diversity in unity'.

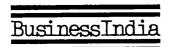
Secondly, it is this growing concern for diversity and plurality that can be seen in the essays written by the Soviet scholars. In fact, one smells the anguish of A.A. Prazauskas when he writes in his essay about the dominance of 'ethnic Russians' over other groups in every respect or how, 'non-Russian languages have been systematically driven away from public life'. It is this anguish that leads Alexandre Ossipov to assert that ethnic revivalism is nothing but a 'reaction to violent standardization in all spheres of life in a totalitarian society'.

The book, one would argue, reminds us once again of the challenging task awaiting us: how to construct a truly plural society or, to use Gandhi's language, a 'gentle anarchy'. As we find ourselves caught in the vicious circle of violence and counterviolence, 'unity' and 'separation', 'patriotism' and 'terrorism', 'universalism' and 'particularism', we begin to strive for a new discourse, a new praxis. Although the book under review has not always been able to retain the necessary sharpness and vision, its limited, yet worth-remembering success lies in its ability to stimulate us to hear what ought to be heard, to see what ought to be seen.

Avijit Pathak

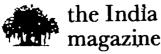
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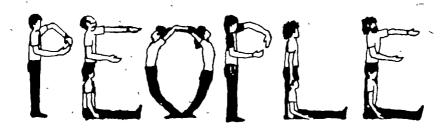
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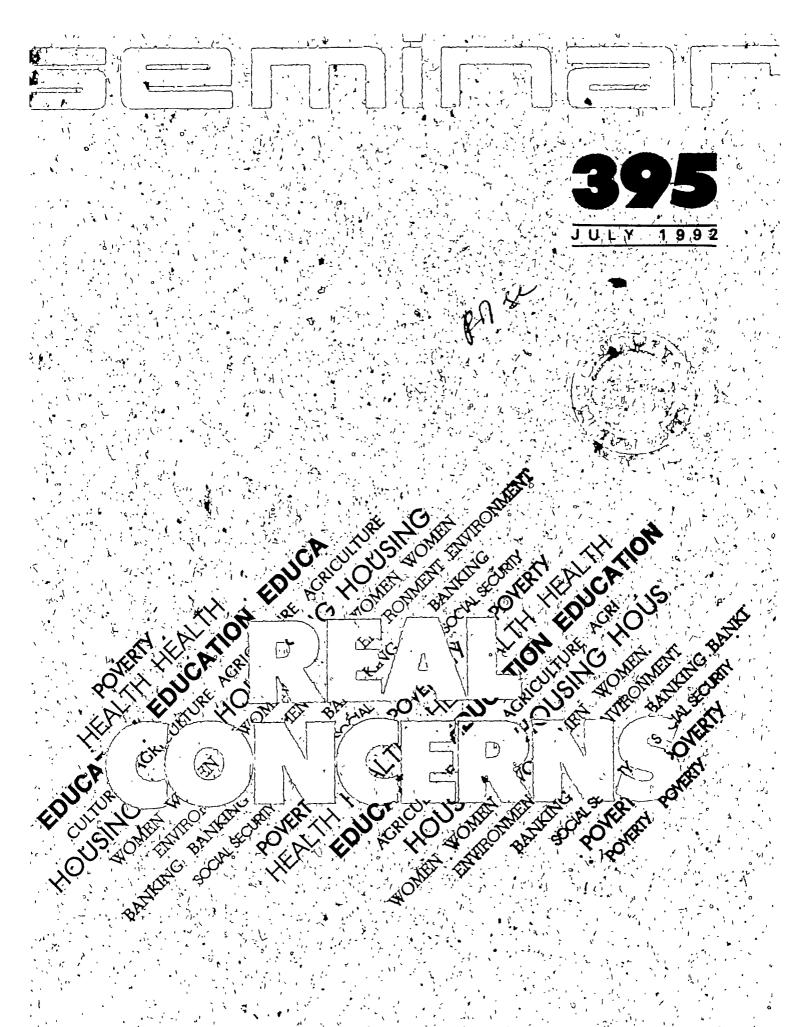
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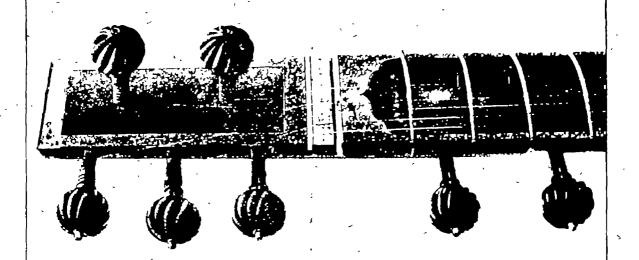


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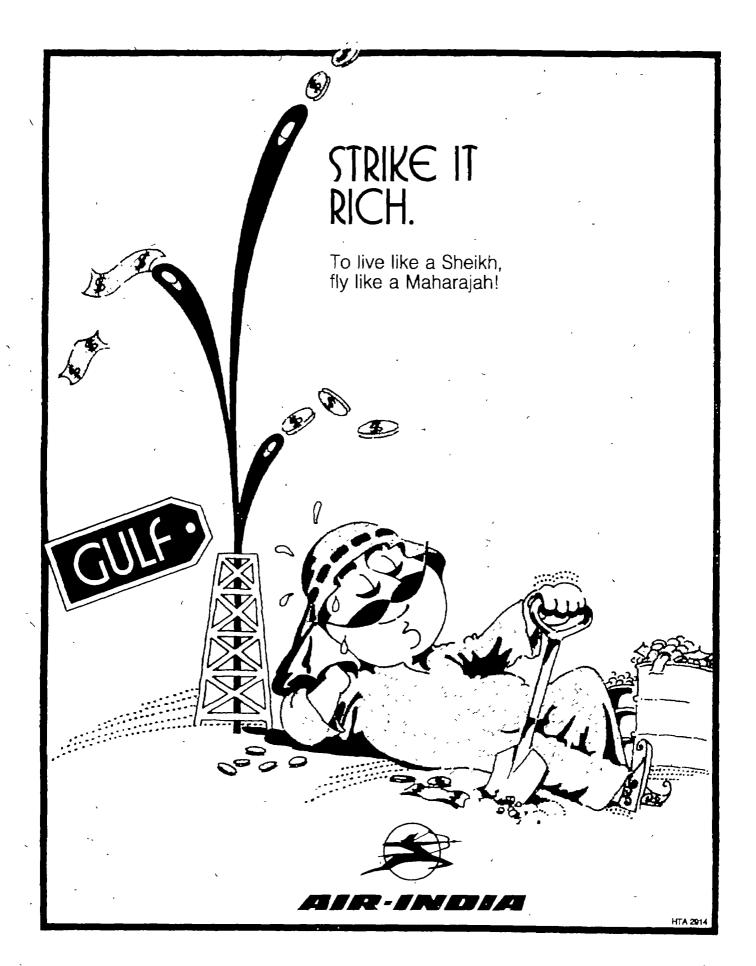
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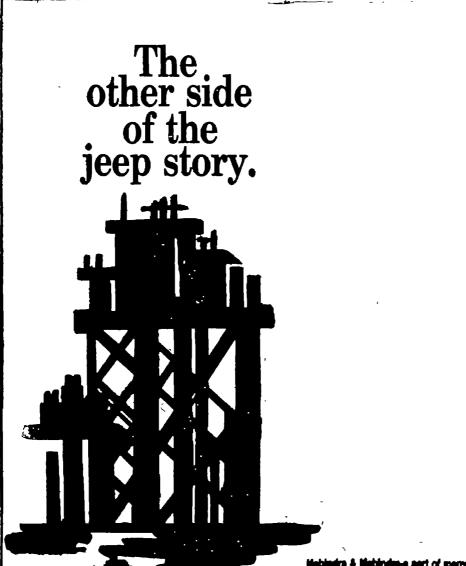
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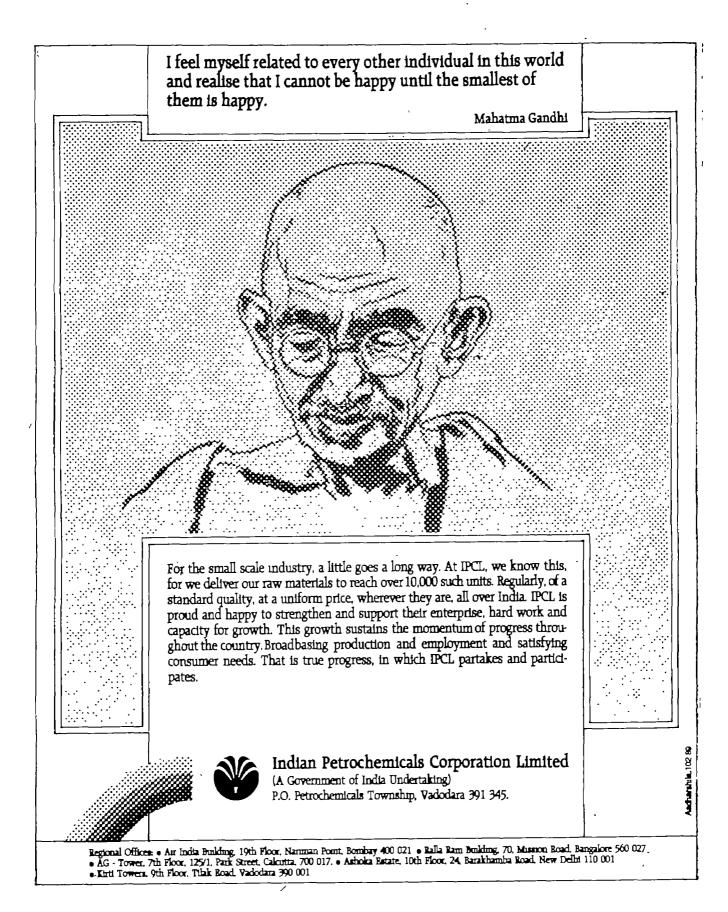
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# SEMMET

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a journal which seeks to reflect through free discussion, every shade of Indian thought and aspiration. Each month, a single problem is debated by writers belonging to different persuasions. Opinions expressed have ranged from janata to congress, from sarvodaya to communist to independent. And the non-political

specialist too has voiced his views. In this way it been possible to answer a real need of today, to g the facts and ideas of this age and to help thinking p arrive at a certain degree of cohesion and clarit facing the problems of economics, of politics, of c

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NEXT MONTH: AID



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COVER
Designed by Madhu Chowdhury of
Dilip Chowdhury Associates



# The problem

A YEAR of reform has gone by. Much dialogue and debate has been generated focusing on liberalizing the economy. The past decade of unproductive spending, of confused priorities had reduced the exchequer to virtual bankruptcy. The easy and soft option to make an immediate corrective was to go to the International Monetary Fund for a loan. A set of conditionalities were attached to that loan which had to be met. Import, export and trade norms, regulations and restrictions were rationalized, some lifted. But that was all. Euphoric headlines talked of the restructuring of the economy but, looking back, all that has happened so far is a readjustment of the trade policy.

A restructuring of the economy means something else. It requires an assessment of the post-independence blueprint of economic growth and development to ascertain whether the problems of the crucial

sectors of the economy had been addressed. Clearly, enough has not happened.

Even today, with the new rhetoric of opening up the economy, neither the central government nor state governments seem to have the political will to bring true and substantial change. Key areas in the organized and unorganized sectors continue to be ignored.

India has pitifully abysmal standards of living. No government in the past or the present has begun to tackle the problems of poverty, housing, water, health and education. These problems deteriorate with every passing year. To make correctives in these critical areas does not require huge foreign exchange inputs, nor mega corporations to raise money. In the process of reform the government thus needs to find appropriate mechanisms, like mutual benefit societies

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and suchlike, to organize and finance these sectors. No alternatives are being created and all these sectors continue to wallow in a corrupted infrastructure that is funded and controlled by the government alone. Therefore, when there is a squeeze, these crucial sectors are the first to suffer financial cuts, setting them further back. State governments are equally responsible.

All these basic sectors of the economy like agriculture, health, education, housing and social security are not 'high profile'. The politicians, bureaucrats and industrialists congratulate themselves on the progress that they have supposedly made in their sectors. Government prides itself on responding to a 'rapid' liberalization programme. But, it has not responded positively to the fundamental concerns of civilized living. Not only would it be good politics but good economics to focus on these sectors.

Gross misuse and faulty allocation of existing resources have strangled growth in all these basic areas. Management and financial alternatives to rectify the systems on the ground have not been worked out. Government, which should be concerned primarily with investment and growth in these areas, seems to be wasting resources and energy on areas that should be the concern of the private sector. Areas like industry, trade, aviation, telecommunications and the service industry do not require government intervention at all. Within certain parameters, they should be left to fend for themselves. What is needed is a concentration on the investment required to regenerate the real concerns of society. Only then will there be sustained growth—a first step towards restructuring the economy. This issue of SEMINAR looks at some of these areas which are of real concern to all.

# Undermining the future

ARUN SUBRAMANIAM

AT last year's annual meeting of the boards of governors of the Inter-national Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Bangkok, officials negotiating India's \$ 2.2 billion standby loan from the IMF went to considerable lengths to reassure the press that the loan agreement did not contain a 'hidden agenda' as alleged in a section of the Indian media. The standby agreement, they clarified, visualized specific measures to achieve 'macroeconomic stabilization' and initiate structural reform. The former would centre on a sharp reduction in the fiscal deficit, from 6.5% of GDP in 1991-92 to 5% in 1992-93, to a target of 3-4% within four years.

Structural adjustment, in turn, would imply deregulation of industry, trade and tax reform, relaxation of restriction on foreign direct investment and reform of the financial sector: in a word, a set of policies that the government had publicly committed itself to even as it approached the multilateral institutions for help. Hubert Neiss, director of the IMF's Central Asia department, insisted that the Fund bad learnt a great deal from the experience of structural reform programmes of the eighties, in Africa, Asia and Latin America. In particular, that these programmes succeeded only to the extent that they were founded on a wide social consensus, central to which was an equitable distribution

of the burdens that the reforms would inevitably entail in the short run.

But, as the union budget for 1992-93 indicates, this lesson has clearly been lost on the Indian government. The targetted deficit for 1991-92 was met through a combination of creative accounting and a reduction in plan expenditure; while non-plan expenditure marginally increased, plan expenditure was cut by 2%. The target for 1992-93 is proposed to be met by similar means: while non-plan expenditure is projected at 5.9% over the 1991-92 estimate, plan expenditure will increase by just 2.6%. Assuming a 10% rate of inflation, this nominal increase in expenditure translates into a reduction in real terms. What is worse, for all the talk of 'adjustment with a human face', the burden of these expenditure cuts has fallen on the poverty alleviation and social services sector, be it health, education, rural development or social welfare.

Food subsidies are among the first items of government expenditure targetted for reduction by countries undergoing structural adjustment. One-third of adjustment programmes in the 1980s are estimated to have involved reducing food subsidies. This is partly on account of the fact that these subsidies often tend to be indiscriminate, benefiting rich and poor alike. But equally, it reflects

the bias inherent in a programme that stresses the free play of market forces and a minimization of state control over prices. The remedy most often proposed is better targetting of subsidies at the really needy and this is precisely what the government claims it wants to do.

In 1991-92, the actual expenditure on food subsidies at Rs. 2,850 crore was 9.6% higher than the budget estimate and 16.3% higher than that of the previous year. Yet the level of procurement was significantly lower than in 1990-91, an indication of the rise in foodgrain prices. The higher inflation rate in the current year notwithstanding, the 1992-93 budget has made a provision of just 2,500 crore, or 12.3% less, for food subsidies. At the same time the government has extended the public distribution system network to 17,000 'backward blocks'. Not only has no provision been made for this additional burden, but given widespread drought conditions and the possibility of a poor monsoon, actual requirements on this head could be twice that provided.

The sector that has seen the sharpest cuts in the past year, however, is rural development. In 1991-92, total expenditure on rural development, at Rs. 3,021.2 crore, was Rs. 500 crore or 14% lower than that budgeted. Rural water supply and sanitation was the worst hit (-19.2%) followed by the rural employment schemes (-13%), special programmes including rural youth training, drought prone area development and the development of desert areas (-6.7%), and the integrated rural development programme, which aims to provide income generating assets to families below the poverty line (-5.3%).

The 1992-93 budget continues this trend: budget estimates for rural development, at Rs 3,113 crore, is 3% higher than the revised estimate for the previous year but, given inflation, represents a significant drop in real terms. Rural water supply and sanitation has been allocated Rs 162 crore less than that actually spent in 1991-92! Barring rural employment, which has seen a small increase in allocation over expenditures in 1991-92, allocations for

each of the other heads has been cut in real terms.

The health sector has not fared much better. In 1991-92, the department of health expended Rs 525 crore of the pathetic Rs 547.5 crore alloted to it. Expenditure on public health programmes, including those of malaria, filaria, TB, leprosy, trachoma and blindness and goitre control, fell 3% short of what had been allocated to them. The overall health budget estimates for 1992-93, at Rs 560 crore or just 2% over that of the previous year, will amount to a significant cut in real terms. By the same token, revised estimates for the department of education in 1991-92 show an expenditure of 4% less than that budgeted, with elementary education falling short by nearly 7% and secondary education almost 5%. The current year's budget allocation of Rs 1,725 crore for the department is Rs 80 crore less than that estimated for 1991-92 and almost 9 crore less than that actually spent last year.

Un the other hand, expenditure on family welfare has shown a marked increase: as against the 1991-92 estimate of Rs. 759 crore actual expenditure totalled Rs. 866 crore; and estimates for the current year show a significant increase to Rs 1010 crore, almost half of which is accounted for by urban and rural welfare services and maternity and child health. The ministry of welfare, covering scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes has also seen a significant increase in its budget from the Rs 777 crore expended in 1991-92 to Rs. 849 crore in the current year. But considering that actual expenditure in 1991-92 was short of the original estimate, the revised figure for the current year could well tell a different story.

But the basic point about these cutbacks is not their absolute size but rather their impact on the very small budgetary provisions made for major social priorities. The fact is that quite apart from the restrictions on public spending imposed under the IMF and World Bank funding programmes, India has traditionally devoted a very small proportion of its public expenditure to the provi-

sion of social services, much less on the priority areas of primary health and education, safe drinking water, sanitation and family welfare.

According to the Human Development Report, 1991, 37% of India's national income in 1988 was spent by government, of which just 20% was allocated to the social sector. Of this latter sum, 34% was spent on the social priority area, amounting to a per capita expenditure of just \$9 or 2.6% of a per capita GNP of \$340. This placed India among countries with 'low levels of human expenditure' which compare unfavourably with other developing countries like Zimbabwe (12.7%), Botswana (7.7%), Malaysia (6.3%), Morocco (6.3%) and Jordan (5.5%).

L he case for a higher allocation to the social priority sector hardly needs reiteration. In its profile of human deprivation, the HDR 1992 estimates the number of people in India without access to safe drinking water at a staggering 220 million; 3.84 million children die before the age of five, there are 46.9 million malnourished children under five and 75.4 million who are not enrolled in primary or secondary school; India's illiterate adult population numbered 280 million in 1990 of whom 180 million were women; and the total number of people below the poverty line numbered 410 milli-

Yet, as the HDR 1992 demonstrates, despite the dismal tale that these figures tell and the relative neglect of the social priority sector, India has made considerable progress over the past three decades in these very areas. Between 1960 and 1990, life expectancy at birth has increased from 44 years to 59.1 years and the under five mortality rate has dropped from 282 to 142 per thousand live births. Between 1975 and 1990, the percentage of the population with access to safe drinking water has increased from 31 to 75; the daily calorie supply as a percentage of requirements increased from 89 in 1965 to 94 in 1988; and between 1970 and 1990, the adult literacy rate climbed from 34 to 48% while the combined primary and secondary enrollment ratio rose from 49 to 67.

While it is nobody's case that the achievements in these areas are solely attributable to the volume of public investments made, there is little doubt that they would not have been possible without sustained budgetary support. Over the past four decades, expenditures on these heads have steadily increased, both to meet the additional needs of a growing population and to offset the erosion of the money value of such investments by inflation. For the first time, however, this is no longer the case. On the pretext of increasing the efficiency of use of public funds, their total volume has been reduced. Similarly, on the ground that the states' share of centrally collected revenues has increased, there is an effort to transfer the burden of funding these programmes onto them.

Thus, despite claims to the contrary, it is the poor and those least capable of withstanding it who are being forced to bear the costs of adjustment. The ultimate justification for economic liberalization was that the 'planned economy', its socialistic objectives notwithstanding, had failed to meet the minimum needs of the mass of our people. The true measure of the success of the new policies would, one would have thought, lie in their ability to meet the same objective. Instead, in the name of rationalizing public expenditure, the very yardstick of public welfare appears to have been jettisoned.

The consequences of such shortsightedness are not hard to imagine. Despite relatively high private spending in some of these areas, particularly in health and housing, reductions in public spending will almost certainly increase deprivation. The cutbacks in food subsidies will increase food prices, just as cutting the fertilizer subsidy will, and make food unaffordable to larger numbers of people. Cutbacks in rural water supply and sanitation will have disastrous consequences for public health. In the process, India will have succeeded not just in squandering what has been painstakingly achieved in these areas over the past four decades but, worse, through the neglect of her children, have undermined her future as well.

# Unhealthy consequences

MIRA SHIVA

THE past decade has seen major changes and upheavals worldwide: new challenges have arisen even as many of the existing problems, if they have not actually worsened, remain unresolved. It is with a sense of shock and dismay that people concerned about health and human issues watch their governments pressured to implement policies which will wreak havoc on their lives and those of their loved ones. The majority of people in the third world are poor, and in many countries up to 50% live below or on the margins of poverty.

Any further negative change will render them more vulnerable. The adjustment policies that the government is forced to adopt by the IMF threaten to make matters worse.

Those who valued the WHO contribution of the Alma Ata Charter to the world in 1978 have watched its slow erosion, as the concept of primary health care has been reduced from one of overall socio-economic development to a few vertical programmes and further to a few specific programmes like AIDS and population control.

It was in 1986 at the 35th World Health Assembly when we, as part of the Health Action International (HAI) team-a network of drug activists and organizations working for a Rational Drug List-lobbied for a strong resolution on Rational Drug Use. The US delegation, guided by Heritage Foundation (the right-wing think-tank), threatened to withdraw its 25% budget support to WHO. We watched a resolution on Rational Drug Use with no teeth being passed: we were told that who was not a supranational body, and that respective national governments had to make their own policies on regulatory mechanisms to protect their people. They could not expect WHO to do this.

From the 'drug dumping' and 'double standards' practised, it is obvious that things are changing in the un. Divisions and units that were most involved in social/equity activities are being diluted, pruned or simply beheaded. In direct contrast is the sudden increase in power of Bretton Wood institutions like the IMF, World Bank and GATT. Ironically, instead of following the one-country, one-vote system as in UNCTAD, they have assumed a supranational status, with decision-making powers vested in a few privileged nations. The erosion of democracy in the UN system by those who claim to be its caretakers is cause for serious concern.

For those of us who have fought for the peoples' right to information, for transparency, for democratic processes in decision-making, particularly when drastic policy reversal is contemplated, the systematic

denial of information regarding the adverse reactions, serious side effects and hazards of these policies amounts to calculated disinformation and misguidance. Among countries that have received loans from the IMF and the World Bank, hardly any managed to achieve a significant degree of betterment or development. All they did was land up in a crippling debt crisis from which they cannot extricate themselves. As the debt and the interest on it increases, the governments slowly discover that they are no longer in a position to make national policies in the interest of their people.

Today it is no longer possible to talk of loans and developmental aid in purely economic terms. It is abundantly clear that what is at stake is national sovereignty, democracy and the very survival of millions in numerous countries. Debt servicing efforts have required drastic cuts in the social welfare budgets for health, education, food etcetera. This is reflected in the deteriorating health status and the increase in infant and maternal mortality rates. There is also a sharp rise in cases of malaria, filaria, TB, malnutrition, starvation and epidemics of waterborne diseases like cholera, diarrhoea and typhoid.

Illiteracy is also on the rise as more and more children are forced to join the labour force or are unable to pay for their education. Those who cannot be absorbed by the labour force just roam the streets. Larger numbers of women, desperate to make ends meet, are now resorting to prostitution. An increase in the number of prostitutes street children is bound to increase STD, AIDS, drug addiction, crime and violence. Posters and pamphlets moralizing on the use of condoms and drug abuse cannot deal with health problems emerging out of socio-economic injustices. Double standards in the terms of trade make it impossible for poorer countries to earn enough to provide even the basics for their people. So there is hardly any justification for cutting down on public health services and food subsidies.

While 'free trade', 'liberalization' and 'globalization' is being talked

of in one breath, third world governments are being forced to convert their people into 'markets' for goods they do not need. False wants are created by the hardsell of advertising. Unfortunately, therefore, it is not the essential low cost and rational that people go for, but the nonessential and costly consumer items that flood in, eroding scarce resources and confusing and distorting national priorities. The IMF's imposition of uniform conditionalities across the board like the cutting back on food subsidies in some countries would mean writing a prescription for malnutrition or even starvation deaths. For example, in Jamaica, government expenditure declined by 29% from 1981-86, educational expenditure by 40% per capita, health expenditure by 33%, with malnutrition increasing sharply in 1984-85.

According to Latin American economists, the conditions for receiving funds for adjustment programmes are unfair, ineffective and poorly thought out. The main charges levelled against it are: the IMF uses the same recipe everywhere; there are problems with IMF's quantitative targets; the IMF programmes are unnecessarily recessionary; IMF programmes have a regressive effect on income generation and there is an international asymmetry in adjustment costs of external disequilibrium.

It was this and much more that forced Davison Budhoo, the Grenadian economist, to quit IMF and send an open letter, published under the title 'Enough is Enough' to Michael Camadessus, the IMF chief. According to Budhoo, while austerity measures are being forced on indebted countries and they are being accused of mismanaging their economies and for high population growth (a factor that is directly associated with poverty), the gross carnings of an IMF official are 1000 times more than the per capita income enjoyed by twothirds of mankind. Obviously it is in their interest to ensure the wealth and health of their paymasters and they help mastermind the resource flow from South to the North even while the South is made to feel like a beggar. This process began in the colonial period and is being continued now to ensure that the comfortable life-styles of the majority in the North as well as the collaborating elite of the South are maintained

Since this transfer of resources from the South to the North takes place with the devaluation of the local currency, the volume of exports show an apparent increase. But the prices of primary commodities, on the export of which many third world countries survive, have never touched such an all-time low. In addition, export carnings in several third world countries are entirely dependent on the export of one or two commodities, the prices of which are also controlled by a few TNCs. In view of this there is very little chance of the debt being serviced, or the national economies being able to provide for the basic needs of their people i.e. adequate health care, basic education or even food at reasonable prices.

As the UNICEF'S State of the World'S Children Report 1992 claims, in the 1950s the volume of exports in Africa increased by 25% but because of the fall in prices of raw materials, there was a 30% decrease in earnings during the last decade. The report says: 'The real moral hazard is surely to the soul of the world which is prepared to condemn a continent to continued poverty, a generation of children to malnutrition for the sake of collecting interest on moneys which are often irresponsibly lent and most of which cannot possibly be paid (back).'

The irony of it all is that it is not any nation from Africa, Latin America or Asia that is the greatest debtor. With a debt of over 370 million dollars, it is the USA which is the greatest debtor nation in the world. It is a nation where 15% of the world's humanity lives consuming 50% of the energy resources with a life-style of wasteful consumption built in; which talks of free trade to force open third world markets to its products, its violent films, its junk food and its monoculture, while ensuring unhealthy protectionism for itself. And it is this nation that is telling a country like ours the kind of economic policies to follow.

It is tragic that when dealing with issues of economic crisis, recession and so on, priority is not on the measures to curtail overconsumption which is ecologically hazardous and totally unsustainable but on increasingly unjust trade policies, increasing compulsion on the poor to give up more than they already have, and struggle harder and harder under worsening conditions just to survive. When Maurice King stated that UNICEF and others should not waste money in trying to save sick and malnourished babies since in any case they would have little chance of growing up healthy, and that their deaths contributed to population control, he was verbalizing the view of many economic planners: genocide of the poor through planned neglect under the new economic policies.

When Gandhi exhorted Indians to live a simple life, he too advocated austerity. But Gandhi's austerity was different from the 'austerity' that the IMF dictates to the people. Gandhi had said there is enough for everyone's need but not enough even for a few persons' 'greed'. Does and - 'democracy' globalization' mean the implementation of decisions being taken in Washington and Geneva in the interest of a few rich countries? Does it have to be globalization of markets for indiscriminate consumption by those who have the purchasing power? When to exploit, to pollute, to overprice, to refuse accountability, as in the case of the Union Carbide Bhopal gas tragedy, is called 'free trade', then such free trade is dangerous for the health of the people and a nation's economy.

In December 1991, Lawrence Summer, Chief Economist of the World Bank, sent a memo to senior World Bank staff which said: 'Just between you and me, shouldn't the World Bank be encouraging more migration of the dirty industries to the LDCs (less developed countries)?" The economic logic behind his statement being that the economic costs of pollution arising from increased illness and death are least in the poorest countries. According to him, the logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest-wage countries is impeccable. It makes economic sense to introduce pollution in areas which still have low pollution. Finally, he does not think that the poor should worry about environmental problems. 'The concern over an agent that causes a one in a million change in the odds of prostate cancer is obviously going to be much higher in a country where people survive to get prostate cancer than in a country where under-five mortality (child mortality) is 200 in 1000 live births.'

When ensuring action against the unethical marketing and dumping of known hazardous drugs, about which so much incriminating medical information is available, has been so difficult in the past, one can well imagine what it would take to fight hazardous toxic industries with thousands of unknown or little known chemicals and intermediates, specially when our regulatory mechanisms have been so weakened with decontrol, deregulation and liberalization. In India, the clearance given to Dupont under pressure by the trade representative of the US, Carla Hills, to set up a nylon plant in Goa, when for the past five years it was systematically denied acceptance by the Goa Assembly is indicative of a phenomenon that will be seen more and more often. To imagine that Rational Health Care can be ensured under such circumstances is being very naive.

The threat by the US against India under Super 301 to face trade sanctions unless India changes its very comprehensive Indian Patent Act of 1971 is a direct attack on our national sovereignty. At a time when multilateral negotiations are underway in GATT, this implies that there is little respect for national sovereignty or for multilateral agreements which are in any case biased in favour of the powerful. The simultaneous weakening and marginalization of the social and equity divisions of the un bodes ill for the poor of the world, whether they be in the South or the increasing homeless destitutes in the streets of the so-called richer coun-

Even while the third world countries grapple with the structural adjustment programmes (sap) the Uruguay Round will be over and cross reta-

liation legalized. GATT and its three components-Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), Trade Related Investment Measures (TRIMS). and Services Trade—basically attempt to restructure the world even more unjustly and permanently than the DMF and the World Bank. While countries not taking IMF and World Bank loans can escape sap, and theoretically loans can be paid off, history has shown that the painful paying back never stops. Today's Shylocks talk on behalf of these institutions and there is no court to try them. There is no such thing as collective conscience and accountability is only to a few rich nations. Under GATT, countries have to join in the pro first world biased negotiations, at the cost of their own nations. There have been protests by scientists, lawyers and parliamentarians who realize the implications of GATT, but the tragedy is that the economic advisors in their countries think that collaboration is the only alternative.

Reprehensibly, the negotiations are secret with uninformed and unequal participation, though the outcome will totally change the world in economic terms and legalize threats of retaliation and cross-retaliation against countries whose actions might interfere with the trade of the North i.e. trade of the increasingly powerful TNCs.

Patenting genetic resources will create havoc in agricultural societies as its protection and improvement by local farmers could be totally negated through a minor modification by a person/company who will then represent it as their intellectual property right. The link up of grain, which has food commodity value, and its 'regeneration potential' for multiplication with a profit motive will obviously create dependency and further impoverishment of smaller farmers who constitute the majority. They will be forced to purchase these 'one generation' seeds from the seed TNCs. In India where 75% of the people are involved in agriculture, any negative policy decision will pauperize and displace millions as bigger agencies will buy up more land. In the US only huge farmers or corporate houses control land and influence agricultural policies.

Overuse of pesticides, many of which are no longer used in parent countries, has posed a serious health hazard beyond toxicity. Besides teratogenic effects on the foetus, there is also the emerging pesticide resistance to vectors, resulting in diseases like malaria, filaria, kala azar etcetera.

Export-led cash crops have displaced traditional foodgrains and caused over-dependence on pesticides and fertilizers. Cheaper alternatives like millet have vanished, increasing dependency on more marketable commodities like wheat and rice. Even this will become unaffordable once agricultural subsidies are cut and the PDS 'trimmed'. Already the level of malnutrition among our woman and children is high-70% of pregnant women and more than 50% of pre-school children are anaemic. Dr. Gopalan's studies have shown that between 1946 to 1976, as the average height of well-off children has increased, the height of rural children has decreased by two centimetres, with major health problems like stunting, underweight, nutritional anaemia, nutritional blindness, rickets and so on.

GATT negotiations could go through with US and Europe coming to some agreement about the agricultural subsidy. It must be remembered that forcing in subsidies for export-oriented agricultural production and forcing removal of subsidies for food production for the domestic market are two different things. In nations where more than half of the people live below or around the poverty line, the presence of a food subsidy makes all the difference between survival and death.

What will patenting of medicinal plants do to our indigenous systems of medicine? In ayurveda, for instance, the patenting of medicinal plants will adversely affect our indigenous ayurvedic stream of medicine. Would obtaining a patent by some pharmaceutical TNC on a certain plant extract make its use by others illegal? What will be the implication of patenting human genes—when so far no real invention is involved, merely attempts at their isolation?

According to uncrad, "India's Patent Act 1971 was a model patent act for developing countries. Formulated after serious study and discussions by legal and constitutional luminaries, the act safeguarded the interests of the inventor as well as the nation. Under it, the patentability period is five to seven years as compared to 20 elsewhere, and patentability excludes products like food, medicine, horticulture and atomic energy. To get around the widely prevalent 'dog in the manger' attitude, the Indian Patent Act also has a 'License of Right Clause' whereby, if the patent holder is neither bringing in the technology nor letting anyone else work the patent in the interest of the public, the government or any other interested party can negotiate the right to work the patent. Under the Indian act, the onus of proving that a patent has been violated lies with the accusers. There is pressure on India to reverse this, i.e. shift the onus of disproving violation on the defenders. The implications of this are serious, as false allegations can be used to tie up many pharmaceutical units in knots.

hile the general public imagines that great new drugs are discovered and invented every year, this is far from true. The majority of them are 'me too' drugs—it is only occasionally that some great breakthrough takes place. Everyone approves of adequate rewards for inventors but legalizing exploitation in the name of invention and science is not acceptable.

Changes in the Patent Act regarding pharmaceuticals will affect both the prices of drugs and their availability, as they would be under monopoly control for long periods. The secrecy shrouding the GATT negotiations, the aggressiveness in forcing third world countries to change everything to suit the Northerners is too blatantly biased in favour of Western market economies.

All these drastic changes in the global economic scene are being pushed through rapidly without adequate debates within the countries involved. The fact that terms like free trade and liberalization are supposed to connote 'freedom' when they really mean freedom to exploit,

'to pollute', to 'overcharge' with 'bullying' and 'protectionism', is a psychological game. The bubble will burst one day, but unfortunately by then it will be too late.

This is economic warfare and for the millions dying or marked for death, the third world war has already begun. With these changes in economic policies, it is impossible to even think of national health care or rational drug use. The Alma Ata Charter of 1978 talked of the necessity for bettering the social and economic aspects of life in order to bring about improvement in health status. Who's definition of health did not just talk of physical health; it spoke of a state of physical, men-tal, social (spiritual) well-being and not the mere absence of misery. It is evident that every individual concerned about the health and survival of the world and its people has to protest against the ongoing injustice. Rational drug use and rational health care are possible only in a context where 'people and their lives come before profits'.

We are familiar with the exploitative nature of some of the greatest corporate giants in the area of pharmaceuticals, baby foods and pesticides Despite this, we have not involved ourselves too closely with the GATT negotiations. The fact that the situation is rapidly worsening, specially in countries which have taken loans for 'development' is obvious. It is no longer merely a question of disease and the death of millions of people. It is a question of values, of repressing the voice of conscience in the name of a warped development through disastrous economic policies. It is not easy to say 'enough is enough' but future action has to be taken against the background of this reality.

Budhoo dedicates his open letter to the 'people of the Fourth World'—the more than two billion voiceless, starving and diseased souls who share our planet. They transcend national boundaries in their desperation, indicting their tormentors with evidence of the horror, helplessness and suffering of their lives. In a climate of sycophancy, and where self-interest outweighs all other considerations, it will require

tremendous moral-courage to call a spade a spade.

What such economic policies will do to the health status of the people is obvious, but what it will do to health care services is another matter. With increased privatization and with little or no social control, the distortions in health care will worsen. The proliferation of prescriptions for needless drugs, costly diagnostic testing and unnecessary surgery has already become a problem. With the proliferation of medical technologies like ultra sound and amniocentesis for sex determination, female foeticide will increase. Health care costs will spiral with the increase in drug prices.

utting down on public health expenditure will obviously result in epidemics of water borne diseases, cholera, diarrhoea, typhoid, and infective hepatitis, particularly with inadequate expenditure on safe water supply and sewage disposal, specially where the ever-increasing slums are concerned. People move to slums not because they are attracted by the city lights, but because of the systematic pauperization of the poor in rural areas. Already vector borne diseases, specially cerebral malaria are showing an upswing. What causes concern is that not only did the vectors proliferate, they also developed more and more resistance towards pesticides. And to make matters worse, this resistance has extended towards many of the drugs used in the treatment of vector-borne diseases.

No one who truly believes in social justice can afford to remain a silent spectator to the consequences of the new policies. What is being let loose today is more destructive than cancer or AIDS. Unsustainable models of development cannot go on for long and to talk of 'free market' and growth led by market forces indicates a schizophrenia of the mind. When it all collapses, it will be the people who have lived in harmony with nature, with themselves and each other, taking from the earth according to their 'need' and not 'greed', who will provide the antidote to this madness which is being legitimized as 'growth' and 'development'.

# Uncertainty in education

R. RAJAGOPALAN

THE famous 93-year-old Central College in Bangalore is facing closure due to the callousness of the university. The Madras Christian College, nearing its bicentenary, is rocked by battles between the teachers and the management. One chance remark on the Satanic Verses by the Pro Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Millia is enough to make the students go on a rampage. And unconcerned by all this, IIT graduates continue to queue up before the American consulates for their visas and Tamil Nadu universities continue to debase the Ph.D. degree by awarding it to governors and chief ministers. All this is only a sample of the current degenerate status of Indian higher education.

The scene in school education is no better. Dropout rates, disparities and disenchanted students and teachers are only increasing in number. The central budget allots just Rs. 280 crores to elementary education compared to Rs. 470 crores for higher education. Universal primary education remains a dream and as if to confirm it, great importance is now being given to the National Literacy Mission.

In the context of this bleak picture, a study of the impact of the new economic policies on education seems irrelevant. Having seen many new educational and economic policies in the past, one can be pardoned for asking: can any policy make the educational scene worse or better? But the answer is: yes, the new policies are capable of making things worse, if some of the rumoured measures are implemented.

As in many other sectors, in educational circles too, there is a feeling of disquiet and uncertainty regarding the impact of the new economic policies. In the government and outside, there are more rumours than facts, more fear than optimism. Conflicting signals from the government and other agencies are not exactly helpful in assessing what is likely to happen. 'Higher education may go the private way' was the headline in The Hindu on 12th April this year. Yet, on the 26th of the same month an Indian Express report had the title 'Privatisation of higher education ruled out'! One explanation was that the existing institutions would not be touched, but new ones would be in the private sector. Yet only recently there was a renewed assurance of the government setting up a new ITT in Assam! What should one believe and what should one expect?

Amidst all this uncertainty, however, the one mantra that is repeated again and again is 'privatization'. At a recent meeting of the consultative committee of the Human Resource Development Ministry, Arjun Singh was asked if there was a proposal to privatize higher education. Although the Minister denied that there was any such move, he added that the government would encourage private initiative in higher and technical education to supplement state efforts.

What will privatization mean for the university system? As it is, universities have been mushrooming all over the country—set up by politicians to satisfy a caste group here, to have something to name after a local hero there, to impress a vote bank before elections or just to give obliging academics appointments as Vice—Chancellors and Registrars. As a result, the resources of the state

governments and the University Grants Commission are being spread thinly over the ever-increasing number of fund-seekers.

Gross disparities constitute another important feature of the current university scene. At one end we have the apex institutions like the IITs, IIMs and AIIMS, followed by the central universities. This group gobbles up a good proportion of the total budget for education. Then there are the innumerable state universities supported by UGC and the state governments. Most of them are plagued with poor facilities, corruption, scandals and student unrest. At the other end there are the small colleges, where everything except teaching and learning takes place.

If private initiative is now encouraged in higher education, it will only result in more institutes and universities being set up by politicians and others seeking a fast buck or by special interest groups seeking to protect their own fraternity. With money-making being the sole criterion, facilities and standards will be poor. We can cite as examples the many private engineering colleges started in Tamil Nadu which are disasters as educational institutions. but goldmines for their owners. Privatized higher education will become much more expensive, taking it out of the reach of even the middle class.

True, here and there a few good institutions will be set up by private groups. But they are again likely to be elitist to the extreme, catering only to the very rich. An existing example is the expensive Manipal Medical College which attracts foreign students and wards of NRIs. In addition, teachers cannot expect fair emoluments and promotion policies from most private managements. This will keep the more competent away from the educational sector. Mediocrity will thus take over and standards will suffer.

Meanwhile, the existing statesupported universities will be starved of funds and will decline even further. The new private expensive institutions will not necessarily offer good quality either. In short, privatization will only sharpen the existing disparities and generally lower the average quality of education, except for a few islands of excellence.

Privatization would also mean certain disaster for the humanities and perhaps also for the social sciences. As it is, engineering and medicine have been given a disproportionately high status among the disciplines. A few years ago, a Tamil Nadu minister wanted to do away with what he called non-utility courses in colleges. These included areas like history and philosophy. In technical institutions, professors of engineering are always itching to fill the entire curriculum with their subjects and do not see any need for courses in humanities and social sciences.

Private initiative in education will, if anything, be even less tolerant of the humanities and the social sciences. There will be a scramble to start more engineering institutes, medical colleges and management schools rather than colleges of arts. Disciplines like commerce and finance will survive, but not history or philosophy.

Ironically enough, American scholars are now waking up to the importance of the humanities and the social sciences. For example, in his book The Closing of the American Mind, Professor Allan Bloom of the University of Chicago laments the fact that American universities no longer provide knowledge of the great tradition of philosophy and literature that make students aware of the order of nature and of man's place within it. Bloom has followed up the book's suggestive title with an even more revealing sub-title: 'How higher education has failed democracy and impoverished the souls of today's students'. Indian curriculum makers have no such doubts. For them, science, technology and medicine are the only subjects worth bothering about. Privatization will only accentuate this dangerous belief.

It is clear that, if the new economic policies are to succeed, the country has to reach higher levels of competence in science and technology. But these very policies seem to make

it difficult to do so. For example, the IITs, RECs and others are being asked to raise their own resources. Right now, these institutions receive funds from the government in two ways: directly from the HRD Ministry and indirectly through other agencies which sponsor research projects. A substantial proportion of the direct allotment goes into salaries and maintenance. New research facilities are created primarily through sponsored research projects and special allocations for modernization.

The institutions have responded by increasing the tuition fees, but income from fees is an almost negligible component of the total revenue. The only other way of raising resources is to turn to industry. There is no reason why industrial organizations should now flock to these institutions for consultancy. In the current liberalized climate they would probably look for easy import of foreign technology to make quick money. It is very doubtful if they would wait for engineering colleges to develop new technologies. The track record of these institutions in this regard has not been very encouraging either.

There is certainly a case for asking the technical institutions to do more relevant research, to produce graduates better suited to our needs, to sensitize the students to the problems of our society and to try and retain them in the country. But slashing the budget, cutting the facilities and reducing library grants will not help anyone.

As in everything else, we will probably be ordered by the World Bank to follow the American model in education too. But how is that model itself doing? One often reads reports of studies confirming the dismal state of American education. A recent survey by the National Geographic Society showed that a majority of Americans cannot locate the country's capital on a map. There have been other reports on the low levels of competence of American students in mathematics and science, when compared to students of Europe or Japan. It is true that the bulk of the Nobel prizes still go to Americans, but a large number of these laureates are Jewish

immigrants and some are Asian-Americans like Chandrasekhar and Khorana.

Undergraduate education in America is quite expensive and not everyone can afford to pay for the best quality. Given the loose family ties and lack of parental support, American students like to begin working as early as possible. As a result, the percentage of foreigners, particularly Asians, in American universities has been increasing. It is well known that sponsored research in America will virtually collapse without Asian graduate students. In short, we have to be very wary of following the American model in education.

One feature of the American education scene is the major role played by philanthropists, businessmen and industrialists in founding and supporting institutes and universities. The famous Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, where Einstein worked for long, was set up by the munificence of a supermarket owner. The Emory University gets its support from the Coca Cola corporation. One can quote many such examples of corporate support to education.

In India, however, the wealthy individuals and companies do not seem to be eager to support education in any big way. Why have the Tatas not done anything significant in recent years for technical or higher education in the country? Since setting up the Indian Institute of Science and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research years ago, there has been no fresh initiative from them. Even the Birlas, who set up two institutes of technology at Pilanı and Mesra, are said to have lost interest in actively supporting these two institutions. We can only conclude that the current generation in these families does not have the kind of interest in education shown by the previous one. Coca Cola will certainly flow in the country from 1993, but we will not get an Emory University here. Then we are only left with the Ambanis and Harshad Mehtas and we know what they are likely to do if they ever take time off from their manipulations and turn their attention to education!

Private initiative already exists in the school system and we know what it has done. For example, driven by demand, scores of English-medium nursery schools have sprouted in big and small towns, catering to the rich as well as to the poor. Just in one small poor neighbourhood called Taramani in Madras, there are not less than 10 such nursery schools. A poor worker spends Rs. 20 a month to send his child to such a school, just to hear it recite an English nursery rhyme. But chances are very high that the child, unable to cope with the load, will drop out before it reaches class 5 or 6.

Another example of private greed is the so-called computer education in schools. The parent, who is a willing victim in this game, pays up Rs. 500 to Rs. 1000 per year (right from class 3) for computer studies. He mistakenly believes that this would give a headstart to his child in this competitive world. The school collects the money, pays a part of it to a training institute and pockets the rest. The institute takes over the training and does whatever it wants to in the name of computer literacy. Everyone is happy in this maze of ignorance—except perhaps the child!

Will the new policies bring nothing but more problems or will there be a positive side too? Let us imagine a positive scenario: The subsidy on higher education is slashed and the money saved is pumped into elementary education. This results in more schools, more teachers, better facilities and lower dropout rates. Meanwhile the higher education system is made more accountable and it starts producing the right kind of manpower suitable for the country's development and readily absorbable by the job market. The apex institutions, forced to survive on their own, turn to the kind of research directly relevant to the country's needs. A philanthropist even sets up an institute exclusively for basic research in the humanities and social sciences, where scholars are free to think about man and society.

It is a beautiful, even a realizable, dream. But will it ever come true?

## Living conditions

MILOON KOTHARI

ANY form of structural intervention in the survival strategies that sustain societies faces a fundamental challenge if it is to retain validity. The intervention has to have the ability to impart new life, new energy to the survival strategies. In a country like India, where such a large part of our population lives on such a low threshold of the basic entitlements of life, any new dynamic is likely to be felt firstly and lastingly by people where they live and the manner and means with which they live.

The questions need to be asked: Is the IMF Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) adopted by our government conscious of its effect on the livelihood, health, housing and environmental conditions of the large part of our population that is already living in inadequate conditions? Was there an analysis of how similar models of orthodox SAPs have impacted upon the lives of similar social groups in other countries that have adopted SAP?

There appears to be widespread agreement amongst all who have been honestly grappling with India's reality, and where we have reached as a nation today, that structural transformation is necessary, indeed critical. But has there been a debate that looks at what model of adjustment we should adopt? Should it be a homegrown model built on our

own capabilities and strengths or should it be a model guided and influenced by forces abroad? Was the country's majority, in fact, consulted prior to the radical tampering with our economy on which we have embarked? One final question: As the nation races towards international economic integration and acceptance, do the present and future conditions of the poor and disadvantaged groups matter any more?

These queries are posed as reminders and for reflection. Such reflection is necessary and urgent because of what a survey of the abundance of literature available from across the world on the human impact of SAP reveals. Almost without exception the adoption of SAPs in Latin America, Africa and Asia have resulted in severe and debilitating effects on the housing and living conditions of citizens, particularly the poor but also the middle classes.

Burdened with repayments on debt and conditionalities that invariably dictate reductions in public expenditure, the countries that have adopted SAP have reduced critical allocations towards improving living conditions. SAPs have also resulted in a wide-scale shift from agricultural to industrial economies, the accelerated deterioration of the environment and a rapid decline in health standards: all combining to create a situation today where SAPs are identified as being the prime cause for the life-threatening dimensions in which millions of the world's citizens are forced to live.

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If we attempt to delineate the causes for such a state of affairs, we can identify common indicators of social, political and economic change that in one combination or another result in a decline in living conditions. Some of these processes, it must be noted, were taking place in societies as a result of misguided development policies anyway. What sar has done, however, is greatly aggravate or initiate these tendencies and lock societies into spirals of rising debt burdens on the one hand and on the other a corresponding deprivation of many of their citizens.

\*The growth in disparity of wealth: an increase in the 'haves' and a decline in the 'have nots', a growth in development bias towards urban sectors and a decline in the viability of self-sustaining rural economies.<sup>1</sup>

\*The 'retreat' of the state: governments abrogating their responsibilities for sustaining and creating conditions for the achievement of basic entitlements. Reduced expenditure on social sector spending (health, education, drinking water and irrigation, employment generation, poverty alleviation, electric supply, roads and transportation). An increase in abrogation to fulfil constitutional duties and international legal human rights obligations.

- \*The adoption of 'user charges': the initiation of pricing essential services (water, electricity, sanitation) regardless of whether people can afford to pay. Such free-market strategies despite calls by the United Nations, among others, to make certain entitlements (primary health, civic services and education) free.
- \*A decline in incomes: the fall in real wages, rise in prices of essential items and a rise in unemployment except for those with links to international finance and capital.
- \*A substantial focus on exportoriented economies: bringing, for example, agricultural economies into industrial economies.
- \*The stifling of democratic institutions: the closing of space for voices of dissent, a crackdown on trade union activities and a growing disregard for democratic institutions. The increased co-option of the voluntary sector.
- \*The restructuring of land ownership: from the shift in agricultural patterns, from the commodification of land, housing and natural resources.

The emergence or aggravation of these indicators create crisis situations whose dimensions have a direct impact on the state of living conditions.

- i) Widespread violation of human rights: the right to health, housing, livelihood, education and safe environment. The attendant destruction of local knowledge, identity and skills.
- ii) Forced evictions: the displacement and uprooting of communities from their homes. An increase in homelessness and landlessness.
- iii) A decline in health conditions: the life-threatening decline in the quality of living conditions. A rise in child mortality and outbreaks of communicable diseases.
- iv) A deleterious impact on natural resources: an increase in the dependence on inferior quality biomass for meeting survival needs (fuèl, fodder, building materials, water).
- v) The marginalization and alienation of the poor and disadvantaged: the further weakening of capacities of the already economically and ecologically vulnerable segments of society. The creation of reserves of 'cheap labour'.
- vi) The institution of a state of disequilibrium: the rise in social conflict, the fall of governments, the creation of social and political instability, the decline in national sovereignty.

he immense loss of social and human capabilities and capital that accompanies these dimensions and the repeated occurrence of these phenomena are rarely acknowledged in the analyses that the IMF and World Bank carry out of SAP adaptation. These dimensions are, in fact, seen as 'residual' and take second place, if any, to the primacy of 'things'—GNP, capital investment, debt-service ratios, capital-output ratio, foreign resource gap, general accumulation and so forth.

In a recent written statement to the United Nations, the IMF states

<sup>1.</sup> This indicator is also glaringly evident between the North and the South. The 1992 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Human Development Report reveals disturbing data. Over the last decade alone the North has received \$1.3 trillion from debtor nations. This has been called 'the greatest transfer ever of public wealth into private hands'.

that, 'The goal of the Fund's policy advice to its member countries and of the programmes supported by the use of the Fund resources is the achievement of lasting growth that promotes a genuine improvement in living standards. It is our view that structural reforms, underpinned by sound financial policies, i.e. SAPs that confront and eliminate deeprooted impediments to good quality growth, are essential if the economic and social betterment of the population at large is to be achieved." The scale of devastation caused by SAPs reveals how pointless it is to continue making such pious statements. We only need to take a closer look at some of the dimensions of the crisis created by SAPs to expose just how far removed from reality it is and how selective are the judgements and prescriptions of the IMF.

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he phenomenon of forced evictions and the dispossession of people and communities from their homes is often not recognized as a consequence of SAP. The processes that lead to displacement are diverse and overlapping: the rise in unemployment, changes in modes of agricultural production particularly affecting small farmers and rural workers, intensified extraction of natural resources to fuel foreign trade, overall reduction in purchasing power due to fall in real wages and rise in the cost of basic necessities, increase in market-based private sector housing policies and the corresponding increase in land and housing prices and so forth.

Indisputably forced evictions are a gross violation of human rights and the ultimate violation of the right to a place to live. In a landmark resolution last year the United Nations has recognized this and pointed out that forced evictions 'can be carried out, sanctioned, demanded, proposed, initiated or tolerated by a number of actors, including, but not limited to occupation authorities, national governments, local governments, developers, planners, landlords, property speculators and

bilateral and international financial institutions and agencies'.3

The tragic human cost of the process, of forced evictions and the international recognition of their complicity in 'tolerating' this practice exposes the 'selective' criteria applied by the thr and World Bank in monitoring the progress and success of nations that have adopted SAPs, Thailand is a case in point and is referred to in an IMF publication as a country that is 'an excellent example of successful development, combining adjustment with growth'. The document also mentions the plans of the Thai government under its Seventh National Economic and Social Development Plan (1992) -1996) to reduce poverty and income inequality.4 The document ignores completely, however, the intentions in the same governmental plan to forcibly evict up to 62,000 families from their homes in Bangkok alone during the same five-year period. The IMF paper also ignores current threats against the rural communities in the northeast of Thailand, as contained in the Thai government's Forest Recovery Programme, that could result in the involuntary resettlement of over one million people.

A similiar scrutiny of the Philippines reveals that this country is also cited as a success story with a 'honorable record of debt repayments'. In a recent report in The Guardian, it was stated that, 'The Philippines debt payment is \$ 6 million a day. To pay the interest the country has dug up coral reefs, replaced agriculture with industry and squeezed its poor beyond endu-

- 3 Resolution titled 'Forced Evictions' adopted unanimously by the United Nations Sub-Commission on Human Rights on 26 August 1991 See also for implications for India, Miloon Kothari, 'Forced Evictions and the United Nations', Mainstream, Annual 199!.
- 4. Mf (Robinson, Byron, Teja and Tseng), Thailand: Adjusting to Success—Current Policy Issues (Occasional Paper No. 85), Washington D.C., August 1991, p. 1.
- 5. See: 'Thailand's Forest Recovery Programme threatens to evict 12 million people'. Housing by People in Asia (October 1991), No. 3, published by Third World Network and Asian Coalition for Housing Rights. Also see: Habitat International Coalition, 'A Global Survey of Forced Evictions' Violations of Human Rights (February 1992).

rance. The process has displaced hundreds of thousands of people from their productive lives and driven them into huge squatter settlements which surround every city." Similar brutal evictions have resulted in other countries that are labelled by the IMF and World Bank as 'successes': Mexico, South Korea, Botswana and .Indonesia are some that are often cited. We, in India, are already dangerously close to having institutionalized the evictions process as an 'unfortunate' but necessary price to pay for progress and development. SAP will serve, if the experiences of other countries are any indication, to give yet another convenient justification for the process of uprooting to continue and to be intensified.

Another chilling portrayal of the negative impact of SAP is illustrated by the sharp decline in living conditions and the outbreak of communicable diseases following the adoption of austerity policies induced by adjustment.

Burdened with repayments on debt and conditionalities that dictate reduction in civic infrastructure (water and sanitation), several countries in Latin America have experienced sudden outbreaks of cholera. The IMF, in fact, has been held directly accountable for this decline in the human condition. In a statement issued in Lima, Peru, by the Director-General of the World Health Organization (who) during the outbreak of the devastating cholera epidemic in mid-1991, the complicity of the IMF was pointed out.

<sup>2.</sup> Written submission by the IMF to the United Nations Sub-Commission on Human Rights, 9 September 1991, UN document No. E/CN.4/Sub 2/1991/63.

<sup>6</sup> See Victoria Brittain, 'Deadly Rates of Self-Interest', *The Guardian*, 15 May 1992. This article was based on the report by John Pilga on Third World Debt subtitled.'War by Other Means' shown on BBC TV, 19 May 1992.

<sup>7.</sup> For an excellent study of the impact of SAP on rural farmers in Mexico, see Cynthia Hewitt de Alcantara 'Economic Restructuring and Rural Subsistence in Mexico. Maize and the Crisis of the 1980s', United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) Discussion Paper 31, January 1992. See also Asian Coslition for Housing Rights 'Report on Fact-Finding Mission to South Korea', 1980. For examples from countries see Scott Leckie, When Push Comes to Shope: Forced Evictions and International Law (1992), Netherlands Ministry of Housing, Physical Planning and Environment.

The outbreak quickly spread to Chile, Bolivia, Brazil, Equador and Columbia: 'The economic adjustment programme dictated by the IMF, is responsible for the increasing cholera epidemic in Peru...without doubt, in order to comply with payments claimed by the IMF, Peru now finds itself in a position of not being able to allocate more resources to fight the cholera epidemic.'<sup>8</sup>

The mability to arrest the deterioration of health standards and to allocate resources for improving living conditions has led, to take the case of Philippines, to a horrifying computation that estimates that one child dies every hour from the effects of debt servicing, which includes lack of primary health care, lack of clean water, unemployment for parents, lack of shelter and malnutrition."

Such a graphic statistic illustrates well to what length governments are willing and coerced to go so that their repayments remain 'honorable' and they can continue to borrow more regardless of the life-threatening conditions in which their citizens are forced to live. 'It is foolhardy, to say the least, that the Philippines continues to scrupulously pay its foreign debt even as the country reels from a series of natural calamities that started with an earthquake in July 1990 and continue to this day with the explosion of Mount Pinatubo. In between, there have been droughts, typhoons and floods. Altogether, these disasters have killed and injured thousands of people, rendered tens of thousands as refugees and wrought havoc upon industry and agriculture.'10

It was only in 1988 that the cholera epidemic of Delhi killed 1500 people due to the neglect before and during the outbreak by the civic

authorities.<sup>11</sup> Communities all across the country are not only forced to live in areas threatened by floods, droughts and earthquakes but are in need of urgent development inputs. If instead of providing for these inputs our government, induced by SAP, reduces allocations, this will only create even more severe and debilitating living conditions and lead to the endangering of even more lives.<sup>12</sup>

We need to particularly keep in mind the severe impact on women and children that SAP-induced decline in living conditions creates. Numerous studies have shown that the disproportionate burden of adjustment induced austerity falls on women as they are the ones who are forced to bear the increased pressure of adjustment and take over the many functions abandoned by the state.<sup>13</sup>

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Ln addition to the growing number of studies on the social impact of SAP that have emerged from groups and coalitions working in adjustment affected countries, a consistent critique of IMF and World Bank policy has emerged from within the United Nations human rights bodies. These studies are a valuable source of information and relevance as their premise is based on the respect for basic human rights guided by the principles and directives of international human rights law. A significant culmination of the longstanding concern within the United Nations on SAP was marked by the presentation in August 1991 of a report devoted entirely to the impact of adjustment on the realization of economic, social and cultural rights. This report undertaken by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Danilo Turk, was based on an extensive global survey of NGO sources and of United Nations, IMF and World Bank documents.

Space does not permit lengthy and deserved quotation but a number of remarks from the 'summary of conclusion' section of this report will indicate the thrust. 'SAPs continue to have a significant impact on the overall realisation of economic, social and cultural rights, both in terms of the ability of people to exercise these rights, and of the capability of governments to fulfill and implement them. While significant and positive changes have taken place concerning the design and nature of adjustment, these have yet to result in a marked shift sufficient not only to protect fully the rights of the most vulnerable, but actually to decrease levels of impoverishment. Human rights concerns continue to be conspicuously underestimated in the adjustment process....' ...There is little evidence pointing to the adjustment process actually being overtly successful in achieving its aims, let alone in addressing the needs of the most vulnerable. '... Adjustment, although called "structural", rarely addresses the true structural and international nature of the causes leading up to these measures."14

L he main body of the report also details the negative impact of SAP on the right to housing, health, education and development. The report points out that civil and political rights are also affected. Special sections are devoted to the impact on the poor, women, children and the middle class. The final report of Danilo Turk is to be presented to the United Nations in August 1992 and will contain a consolidated set of recommendations and conclusions. The 1991 report, however, makes a valuable preliminary recommendation for a United Nationswide effort to draft basic policy

<sup>8.</sup> Press statement of Hiroshi Nakajima Director-General of who, as reported in *Third World Resurgence*, No. 10, 1991.

<sup>9.</sup> Op. cit. Victoria Brittain, 'Deadly Rates of Self-interest'.

<sup>10.</sup> Oral statement by International League for the Rights and the Liberation of Peoples: 'Repudiate the unjust international economic order in the Philippines and elsewhere'. Delivered to the UN Sub-Commission on Human Rights, August 1991.

<sup>11.</sup> See 'Crime goes unpunished', a report on the cholera epidemic, Nagrik Mahamari Janch Samiti, October 1988, New Delhi. Also see the Hindi report 'Kiski Dilli, Kiski Shaan'.

<sup>12.</sup> For the likely impact on natural resources, see Miloon Kothari and Ashish Kothari, 'Structufal adjustment—the havoc it will cause to the environment', *Indian Express*, 30 April 1992

<sup>13.</sup> For an excellent study on this issue see Engendering Adjustment for the 1980s: Report of the Commonwealth Expert Group on Women and Structural Adjustment. (London, Commonwealth Secretariat Publications, 1989). Also see World's Women—Trends and Statistics 1970-1990, United Nations, New York 1991.

<sup>14.</sup> Second Progress Report of the Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Danilo Turk), UN Doc. E/CN. 4/Sub. 2/1991/17.

guidelines on SAPs and human. rights.

The views and recommendations expressed by Danilo Turk were reflected in a resolution adopted by the Sub-Commission on Human Rights that expressed concern 'at the negative effects of SAPs upon the realization of economic, social and cultural rights'; and urged 'the international and financial institutions, in particular the World Bank and the IMF, to take greater account of the adverse impacts of their policies and programmes on the realization of economic, social and cultural rights'. 15

United Nations Commission on Human Rights in continued recognition of the immense problem caused by SAP, in a resolution took into account 'the particular concern expressed by the General Assembly at at the growing deterioration of living conditions in the developing world, at its negative effects on the full enjoyment of human rights... and the terrible effects of the heavy burden of external debt on the developing countries'.16

Many additional United Nations studies have come to similar conclusions. Aside from the human rights bodies themselves, documents expressing a strong critique of IMF and World Bank SAPs and their human impact, have emerged from the Department of International Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (BCLAC) and the Economic Commission for Africa (BCA). UNICEF'S seminal work in the field of adjustment<sup>17</sup> must also be mentioned along with the work and critique developed

within UNCTAD<sup>18</sup> and UNDP.<sup>19</sup> Of particular value is the substantive research being undertaken on mapping the human impact and coping strategies of SAP in Africa and Latin America by the United Nations Research Institute of Social Development (UNRISD).<sup>20</sup>

In their entirety and depth of study these ongoing developments within the United Nations are welcome and need to be utilized as arguments to counter the negative effects of SAP if not the IMF model of SAP itself. There is an urgent need for people and institutions at various levels in India to engage in the debate prevailing in the United Nations. In this respect the eventual drafting of a possible set of guidelines on SAP is particularly valuable. The drafting process of such basic guidelines set within the human rights framework, could well offer a significant contribution to the adjustment debate and provide a venue for exchanging views with and providing information to the international financial institutions, member states and NGOs about the still under-emphasized human rights dimensions of the adjustment process.

For the movements, campaigns, trade unions and the various coalitions representing people's struggles and mobilizing against SAP, it is critical that information on the social impact in India reach the United Nations and the spaces available for expressing dissent against government positions within the human rights bodies be used. Sustained work and presence of this nature is all the more necessary given the stub-

borness with which the IMF and World Bank continue to advocate orthodox SAPs. The questions beg to be asked; why do these institutions, inspite of overwhelming criticisms, continue to push the 'free market' ideology of sAP? Why is it that even though the rhetoric may have changed to accommodate criticism, the policies and programmes at the action level have not?

A brief look at the events that have marked the turbulent history of SAP since 1982 exposes the obstinacy and false rhetoric of the IMF and World Bank. In most cases, the people who have had to bear the brunt of the austerity measures have never been consulted or informed of the tragedies about to strike them. Since the beginning of the SAP era, 20 countries have experienced food riots (now commonly referred to as IMF-riots) as a direct response to adjustment, parliamentary votes of no-confidence have been raised in all regions as a response to adjustment, military coups have been attempted in adjusting countries and even more tellingly, several governments have fallen as a result of adjustment.

Analysts have also pointed out that in some countries 'we witness the virtual disintegration of some national societies, as regional and ethnic conflict is spurred by declining standards of living and the weakening of already fragile political pacts'.

Ironically the IMF, feigning ignorance of the history of SAP, has declared in a recent statement that 'it should be recalled that the programmes supported by the Fund are the programmes of the countries themselves. Indeed, they cannot succeed unless they have the full support of the population, including those whose full economic, social and cultural rights may be infringed upon.'23 If this is true, adjustment as a process is bound to fail, for few governments can claim to have the full support of the population as far as SAPs are concer-

<sup>15.</sup> UN Doc: E/CN.4/1992/2, pp. 60-62. 'Realisation of economic, social and cultural rights' (1991/27).

<sup>16.</sup> UN Doc: E/CN.4/1992/L.13, Effects on the full enjoyment of human rights of the economic adjustment policies, arising from foreign debt and, in particular, on the implementation of the Declaration on the Right to Development'.

<sup>17.</sup> UNICEF, Adjustment with a Human Face: Protecting the Vulnerable and Promoting Growth, Oxford, 1987; and The Convention: Child Rights and UNICEF experience at the Country Level, Innocenti Studies, Florence, 1991.

<sup>18.</sup> UNCTAD, The Least Developed Countries 1989 Report: Highlights, United Nations, New York, 1990; and Trade and Development Reports, various years (1989, 1990, 1991, 1992.

<sup>19.</sup> UNDP, Development and Adjustment—Stabilisation, Structural Adjustment and UNDP (Policy Discussion Paper) 1989, New York; and World Development Reports—various years (1989, 1990, 1991, 1992).

<sup>20.</sup> See the entire series of publications under the UNRISD project on 'Crisis, adjustment and change'. Also see Dharam Ghai and Cynthia Hewitt de Alcantara, The Crisis of the 1980s in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean: Economic Impact and Political Implications. Also see the excellent compilation in Dharam Ghai (ed), IMF and the South—The Social Impact of Adjustment, UNRISD, 1991 (published by Zed Books, London).

<sup>21.</sup> Op. cit IMF and the South—the Social Impact of Adjustment, p. 38.

<sup>22.</sup> Op. cit. Written submission by the DG to the United Nations.

ned.<sup>22</sup> It would seem, moreover, that the IMF while holding governments responsible for adjustment, expects the citizens whose basic rights are violated to support the very process that leads to this violation.

What then are the true intentions of the IMF and World Bank? What role are they fulfilling as the global order changes? Why should we expect them to think of the wellbeing of the majority of our country's citizens? One clue is offered in the observation by some analysts that adjustment is more about substantiating Bank and Fund dominance, and doing this by financially backing the status quo, than about promoting human development.<sup>34</sup>

Statements from the IMF and World Bank confirm this view. For the World Bank, the main function of external aid is helping to ensure that governments 'sustain reforms against the opposition of those who are adversely affected'. For the IMF 'the reshaping of the tasks of government is an integral part of structural adjustment'. 18

A large range of authors have pointed out that there is something inherently wrong when adjustment is utilized as a means of directing the national economic process externally. The African experience is a case in point where 'orthodox adjustment policies have concentrated unduly on stabilisation, with a bilateral approach between individual African countries and the IMF-World Bank, thus undermining the satisfaction of critical needs and regional multilateral cooperation among African countries...the isolationist national orientation of current adjustment programmes is diametrically opposed to the harmonisation of

trade, fiscal, monetary and other policies required for the promotion of African integration.'\*

At thus seems hard to refute that the initiative in formulating economic policies has shifted from the national authorities to international sources, leading a growing number of analysts to label such a shift as neo-colonialism-in a form that is largely hidden from public view, but with disastrous impact on issues of national sovereignty and domestic control over local economic processes and resources and the corresponding growth in violations of basic rights and the abrogation by governments of responsibility for their citizens welfare, all the while establishing the clear dominance of foreign trade classes.<sup>28</sup> oriented social

In the area of housing and living conditions in India, similar thrusts have been evident since 1987, the socalled, International Year of Shetter for the Homeless'. India, representing one of the major markets to be exploited, and housing and land development being the two most profitable areas of the economy today, has long been the focus of international interests. Along with USAID and the World Bank, these interests have been planning out the housing policies of developing countries and exploring areas for direct investment such as township development. SAP will most certainly give a boost to the private developers and accelerate the turning of a social good such as housing into an industry.30 The discussion thus far was meant to make two points. First, that the IMF and World Bank adjustment programmes continue to be inspired by theory and dogma rather than practical experience of the human, political and economic impact they have had in more than 70 countries that have swallowed the 'bitter medicine'. Secondly, the loss of domestic control and national sovereignty affects the long-term realization of human rights and the upliftment of living conditions.

IV

In the United Nation's special Rapporteur's report discussed earlier, it is stated that ignoring the human rights implications of their (IMF and World Bank) work, these institutions contravene what are arguably their own institutional duties under international law.

The same laws are binding on governments that have ratified these instruments. The two principal instruments, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, contain specific mention of the duty of states to improve living conditions. The International Covenant, ratified by India, contains the most explicit mention in Article 11(i): The States Parties to the present Covenant recognise the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing and to the continuous improvement of living conditions."

The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights monitors State progress on implementation of the International Covenant. The committee also adopts, periodically, general comments that elaborate on and give specific meaning to the clauses contained in the Covenant. Seen from the vantage

<sup>23.</sup> See, for instance, Joan M. Nelson et al. Fragile Coalitions: The Politics of Economic Adjustment, Transaction Books, Oxford, 1989.

<sup>24.</sup> James Bovard, The World Bank vs. the World's Poor, Cato Institute Policy Analysis No. 92, Washington D.C., 1987.

<sup>25.</sup> Towards Sustained Development in Sub-Saharan Africa, World Bank, Washington D.C., 1984.

<sup>26.</sup> Op. cit. ner written submission to the United Nations.

<sup>27.</sup> Bade Onimode, A Critique of Structural Adjustment Programmes and a Proposal for an African Alternative, Third World Economics (Third World Network) No. 33, 1992.

<sup>28.</sup> Op. cit. Day and the South.

<sup>29.</sup> See National Campaign for Housing Rights, 'Towards a Political Economy of Housing Policy'. Lokayan Bulletin. 7:2, 1989. Also see Mileon Kothari, 'The Living Environment', Seminar (376), December 1990.

<sup>30.</sup> See National Campaign for Housing Rights, The Impact of the DG Loan on Living Conditions in India, Booklet (June 1992), Bombay. Particularly sections titled "The Threat to Sovereignty" and 'The Impact on Privatisation'.

<sup>31.</sup> Term used in op. cit, UNICEF, Adjustment with a Human Face.

<sup>32.</sup> For the full texts of this and other human rights instruments see Human Rights—A Compilation of International Instruments, United Nations, New York, 1988.

point of the covenant, which obliges all States Parties to guarantee, at an absolute minimum, subsistence rights for all, the entire adjustment process is questionable. General comment No. 2 notes that the committee recognizes that adjustment programes will often be unavoidable and that these will frequently involve a major element of austerity. Under such circumstances, however, endeavours to protect the basic economic, social and cultural rights become more, rather than less urgent. States Parties to the Covenant, as well as relevant United Nations agencies, should thus make a particular effort to ensure that such protection is, to the maximum extent possible, built into the programmes and policies 'designed to promote adjustment.\*\*

1.00 he most recent comment No. 4 takes this concern even further, asserting that not shielding the poor from a decline in living conditions, could amount to a violation of the covenant. 'The Committee is aware that external factors can affect the right to a continuous improvement of living conditions, and that in many States Parties overall living conditions declined in the 1980s. However, as noted in General Comment No. 2, despite externally caused problems, the obligations found in the Covenant continue to apply and are perhaps even more pertinent during times of economic contraction. It would thus appear to the Committee, that a general decline in living and housing conditions, directly attributable to policy and legislative decisions by States Parties, and in the absence of accompanying compensatory measures, would be inconsistent with the obligations found in the Covenant.

There is reason in quoting at length here. India, being one of the States Parties is grossly overdue (by four years), despite reminders, in fil-

ing its state of living conditions report (under Articles 11 to 15) to the Committee. The guidelines under these articles and Articles 16 and 17 oblige States Parties to report on a variety of issues directly relevant to the adjustment process. India's 'good faith' in having agreed to abide by the Covenant is now seriously under doubt. It should be reiterated that States' reports remain the central international mechanism measuring state compliance with rights and duties found in the Covenant. It is in these reports that governments proclaim the legislative and social measures they are undertaking to fulfil the human rights of their citizens.

In addition to the Covenant; a number of other international Human Rights Instruments face infringement by the process of adjustment. Important to `mention are: The Charter of the United Nations (Articles 55 and 56), The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Articles 25 and 28), The Declaration on Social Progress and Development (Articles 10 and 16), Declaration on the Right to Development (Article 8), International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Article 5), International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Article 14) and the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 27).35 The last two instruments mentioned have each been ratified by over two-thirds of the international community. India however, has yet to follow suit.

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The unfortunate reality today is that our government continues to ignore its freely accepted international legal obligations while continuing to make eloquent and lofty speeches on human rights and democracy at the United Nations. We must also face the possibility that, in addition to delays in submitting State reports and refusing to ratify

international instruments addressing the rights of women and children, the government may well use SAP as an excuse to ignore ongoing human rights violations. The 1992-93 Union Budget made severe cuts on social sectors, especially water, sanitation and the biomass development programme. Such a shift in critical allocation is sufficient evidence and tragically, if one goes by other country experiences over the past decade, only the beginning of a pattern being set in place for the continued denial of basic human rights and the abrogation of state duties towards its citizens.

Given such a grim scenario, it remains all the more incumbent upon social action groups to pressure the government to take its international vows seriously and to submit State reports and ratify all human rights instruments. In addition, being aware of the incomplete nature of what our government is likely to include in its reports to the United Nations, the social action groups need to reach alternative reports on the state of living conditions to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

We must also recognize that the Directive Principles of our Constitution are being similarly violated by the unbridled rush towards 'free market' economic policies and the deeper segregation of society between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' that such policies, given the current division of power and wealth, inherently influence.

Taken from another dimension, both our constitutional provisions and the principles enshrined in international human rights law can be used to cushion, counter and invalidate the adverse social impact of SAP. All the instruments mentioned above are ammunition for deterrence and need to be revisited and recalled.

From the vantage point of living conditions the efforts of the National Campaign for Housing Rights (NCHR) also require close attention

<sup>33</sup> Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, Report on the Fourth Session 1990, UN Doc. No. E/C. 12/1990/3. General Comment No. 2, pp. 88 and 89.

<sup>34.</sup> Adopted during the Committee's Sixth Session, November-December 1991. General Comment No. 4 'The Right to Adequate Housing', UN Doc. No. E/C. 12/1991/CRP. 2

<sup>35.</sup> For quotes relevant to living conditions from these and other instruments see Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, Legal Sources of the Right to Housing in International Human Rights Law, Utrecht, Netherlands, 1992.

<sup>36.</sup> See Praful Bidwal, 'Budget Slashes Social Sector Spending', Times of India, 5 March 1992

and support.37 The principles and mechanisms contained in the 'People's Bill of Housing Rights' that the NCHR is coordinating, offer a diametrically opposed thrust to SAP. The bill in its provisions attempts to create instrumentalities at local levels so that the communities can achieve and sustain adequate living conditions. The bill also informs amendments in existing legislation (particularly the Land Aquisition Act and the Urban Land Ceiling and Regulation Act) to bring them in line such that communities can attain security of tenure and retain access to resources essential to be able to have a place to live in security and dignity.

he task before the nation is to promote and create conditions such that people and communities are able to gain security of residence, health provisions and care, access to civic services and a rise in wages. These are all essential tasks if living conditions are to improve. Faced with such an onerous task that requires all our strengths and capabilities and given that all these sectors are undermined by the adjustment being embarked on, it is quite apparent that the IMF model of SAP just gets in the way of the work that needs to be done to impart a sense of security to our citizens and to promote the path of self-reliance.

We need to learn from other countries that have passed through the 'lost' decade of the 1980s. We also need to take a careful look at the alternatives to the IMF-World Bank SAPs that have been put forward by regional groupings end popular movements throughout the world.

One such effort that carries universal validity is the African Alternative Framework (AAF) to SAP co-ordinated by the Economic Commission for Africa (BCA) and endors-

ed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989. Rooted in the philosophical underpinnings of 'African Humanism' and the cultural traditions of African societies, its 'fundamental ethos is the intrinsic sanctity and dignity of the human person, the collective spirit in social endeavours and mutual support under reciprocity'.

It seeks to provide an alternative that 'must grapple with adjustments and transformation concurrently, and capitalize on the bitter lessons of the 1980s'. The African Alternative seeks a Global Peoples' Coalition and a spirit of global solidarity because the mission it is promoting is 'a mission for all democratic forces the world over.'40 This alternative has been highly commended by popular forces across the globe: 'Although it primarily addresses Africa's needs, the AAF's perspective is also applicable to the debt-ridden nations of Asia and Latin America. In contrast to the ideological rigidity of SAPs, the alternatives in AAF are not reducible to just one set of inflexible policies. Rather, the AAF posits several policy options that may or may not be applicable, depending on the particular history, resource endowments and industrial capacity of individual countries.'41

We, in India, need to grasp and grapple with principles similar to the ones contained in the AAF. We need to debate such and other alternatives available in our own country instead of repeating the mistakes of the 'lost' decade of the 1980s. Most of all we need to recognize that the state of our population and the continuing decline in living conditions does not allow us the luxury to indulge in the trial and error games of the IMF.

<sup>37.</sup> See op. cit. NCHR, The Impact of IMF Loan on Living Conditions in India. Also see proceedings of the workshop 'Structural Adjustment: Its Impact on Living Conditions in India.' NCHR, New Delhi, September 1991.

<sup>38.</sup> See NCHR, 'Towards a People's Bill of Housing Rights—Draft Approach Paper'. Final Draft, July 1990, Calcutta. The first draft of the People's Bill of Housing Rights' (forthcoming August 1992).

<sup>39.</sup> ECA, African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation—AAF-SAP, ECA; Addis Ababa, 1989.

<sup>40.</sup> Op. cit. Bade Onimode, A Critique of SAP and a proposal for an African Alternative.

<sup>41.</sup> For a discussion on the African and other alternatives to SAP see, Recolonization or Liberation—the Bonds for Structural Adjustment and Structurals for Emarcipation. Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice, Canada, 1990.

# Gender and poverty

DEVAKI JAIN .

IN the Indian context women are important economic agents. To use an overused quotation from Mao Tse Tung, 'Women hold up half the sky', and in the poverty sets women hold up more than half the sky. In the poverty sets, women's income is often critical for household survival; at the same time, their fuel, water, cattle, soil, conservation and 'coping' strategies are environmentally less dangerous.

Giving greater recognition to this aspect of women's presence in Indian policy-making is needed to corpower the more widespread image of women being at the centre of the family as reproductive agents, needing support in their motherhood roles. This perspective seeks to strengthen that part of policy which provides women with access to economic resources, like credit, land, market signals, skill upgradation, organization etc.

It is believed that making women more productive, and hence more effective income earners, will reduce their dependency and enhance their status.\* It will also reduce fertility and slow population growth; im-

prove child survival; increase the share of family income allocated to food and health care for children; raise household income, especially in families below the poverty line; and increase aggregate labor productivity and speed growth in key economic sectors. The key word to such advocacy for women is access. Given access, women can improve their position both economically and socially.

An increase in women's purchasing power, articulation power and demand power would, through the pull of demand, draw in the investment for social infrastructure and basic needs. Underlying this kind of analysis is the idea that the 'market' is the best engine of growth. India needs this stimulus. Growth provides and expands opportunities for all, i.e. there will be a demand pull. This demand pull and this expansion of opportunity would draw women into further participation. And, if this demand is accompanied by good wages on the demand side and provision of access on the supply side, women will emerge and occupy their rightful place in the socioeconomy.

This approach to gender issues does not acknowledge the national consensus on decentralized manage-

<sup>\*</sup>Gender and Poverty in India by Lynn Benett et. al. A World Bank country study. Washington D.C., 1991.

ment of development. Now that the Panchayat Raj Amendment Bill (72nd Amendment), is expected to be passed, there will be, not only in Karnataka and West Bengal, but at a more widespread official level, an institutional framework for development. In this framework, the responsibility for the entire packagedesign, implementation. resource mobilization and accountabilitywill devolve around local bodies (or governments). A third of the members of these local bodies will comprise women who will be elected through the political process. Formal and informal encounters with these women, whether in West Bengal, Karnataka, Maharashtra or Tamil Nadu, reveal that they are both capable and eager to build gender into development.

These local bodies are not as aseptic and anaemic as the Mahila Mandals, nor are they as few and peripheral as the non-governmental organizations. Together, they form an administrative system that covers every nook and corner of the country. If the numbers in Karnataka offer any clue to the size of the female population that will be sitting on these bodies, one can see how important it is to take note of this institutional arrangement.

During the last five years, 14,000 women (25% of the total) have been sitting on these managing bodies, whose total strength comprises 56,000 persons. While they self-admittedly floundered in the first two years, they now feel part of the 'main-stream'. They know now how budgets are made and dispensed. At a recent discussion in Bangalore (October 1991), they claimed that 33% representation on these bodies was not good enough. They should be given 50%, as women are still not sufficiently well regarded and a few women cannot overrule men in policy decisions and so on.

While it is true that these women may not necessarily be as poor as those they represent, experiences such as those of the Institute of Education in Pune, Maharashtra, Satyamurthy Foundation in Tamil Nadu and the M.A. Singamma Sreenivasan Foundation in Karnataka, show that the demand groups

in the Panchayat Raj do in fact speak for the poor and minority women, and often have them on their boards.

Depending on how we 'cast' the institutional framework, it is easy to see how policy and programmes could change under it. For instance if we recognize that the women participating in the Panchayat Raj need to overcome the conventional disregard for women in the 'outside domain', it will facilitate the acquisition of funds that could be used specifically by these women. It would enable organizations, such as the Credit Fund for Women to target their services exclusively at these women. Accessibility to a fund denied to men would automatically raise the status of these women, since it is well known that money

The process of political empolopment approaches to gender in poverty and development need to take note of this important emerging institutional framework. Built into this framework is the capacity to take note of regional differences in everything especially women's economic and social status—and to mobilize local resources, both material and human. The framework will also enable access to accountability for policy and programme. This is of crucial importance to women and other subordinate groups. Since 'access' is a function of proximity to power, this is in direct contrast to a centralized system, where the level of accountability to the people is very low. Most important of all, it will provide the most effective basis for 'labour absorption' or sustainable 'full employment'.

There is a lot of evidence to support the feasibility and importance of this last element. Professor M.L. Dantvala and others have argued that full employment or a plan which provides productive engagement for every unemployed male and female can only be made at the local level. This view is further supported at the macro level by economists like Professor Krishna Bharadwaj, who have found that it is local clearing houses of demand and supply which, through innova-

tive institutional mechanisms, work in the LDCs, not the macro-resolutions on the unemployment or 'surplus' labour problem.

he importance of using these mechanisms to raise, resources and to cope with the problem of livelihood for the poor, especially women, gets magnified in the context of India's current economic position. There is no doubt that whatever the long-term gains to be gleaned, there is currently a severe resource crunch. As K.S. Krishnaswamy has stated in the Economic and Political Weekly (19 October 1991): 'Without a major change in the size, structure and working style of the central or state governments, the programme of liberalization will soon be metamorphosed into something totally different in the process of its implementation just as the Nehruvian concept of "democratic planning" was in the past. This is a task which no political party in power has so far been prepared to undertake, for well known reasons. But unless this nettle is firmly grasped, neither the much desired reduction in the fiscal deficit, nor the change in the urban population's life-style necessary for a lasting "adjustment" of the balance of payments will be possible. And Manmohan Singh will have to wait much longer than he thinks for his package of reforms to reveal its 'human face''.'

In fact, those who have been recently engaged in micro projects, even if they are 'development' rather than 'pure credit' ones, have found that the projects' success depends on more than economic input. They are now arguing for area development with the gender factor built into it rather than for projects that are gender-specific. For example, while trying to help women Sikki handicraft workers in the dry districts of Bihar, it was found that there is a limit to how much sustained income this beautiful craft could provide to poor agricultural labouring women. What seemed more important to these women was that the dry area be made agriculturally productive, either through increased water supply or better extension research on dry land farming. Unless their land could provide them with food and employment, rehabilitation through marketing and improving the design of Sikki handicrafts could only be a peripheral activity.

Similarly, in trying to understand the needs of women in the Kumaon district of the Himalaya, it was discovered that for a market support project to have significance, it was necessary to look at the development of the entire area. Linkages between selling their products (woolbased) went all the way back to sheep rearing, which in turn went back to use of land for different purposes. The possibility of giving a 'credit only' fund thus needs to be reconsidered.

In the context of a country undergoing a structural adjustment process for the first time, it may not be improper to postulate a different conceptual framework to look at gender in poverty. For example, it might be necessary to anticipate the specific impacts that structural adjustment might unleash. Africa and Latin America provide enough examples of the special punishment effect that such reform has had on females and children. There are exercises which can track the specific causes of distress under a structural adjustment programme and India would do well to draw some lessons from them, even though these societies are vastly different from ours. Where will the new reforms hurt? If we identify the technologies, raw materials, geographical areas, and employment categories that will be affected, we would be able to determine which groups would be hurt most, and amongst them, how women would be affected.

The principal responsibility of those who are looking at a development plan for women in the next five years would be to design an anticipatory safety net for poor women which would help them preempt themselves' when adjustment strikes. Or, they could use the opportunity of adjustment to improve the status of poor women. The Bank, with all its worldly wisdom and information garnered from similar operations in other developing countries, should be able to help those who are designing macro policies in India to avoid or lessen the painful aspects of accommodating the IMF loan. In other words, we cannot think of gender in poverty without rooting it in the current economic context.

wo seemingly contradictory responses are possible here. One would be a moving away from the 'sectoral' intensification approach such as that taken by several poverty alleviation programmes run by the government. The second would be to strengthen local governance. In other words, mobilizing livelihood for the poor through locally designed strategies i.e., decentralized planning. But economic safety nets by themselves may not be enough, if other 'debt-trapped', IMF-assisted countries are any example. Large bailing out operations may become necessary for women, who are not only sinking, but are at the bottom of the pond.

Gender-based presentations which pinpoint the handicaps that are faced by women, or which pinpoint the discriminatory impact of programmes and policies of development, as well as the place occupied by men and women in work/occupation or the domestic sphere, invite programmes and interventions on behalf of women. It is an approach which attempts to provide equal shares, level inequalities, and redress the imbalance. This redressing the imbalance' or 'intervention on behalf of the unjustly treated', with appropriate policies and programmes may be necessary but not sufficient in mitigating social distances due to disparities. Some of these distances get perpetuated because of certain growth and other fiscal and monetary strategies. Hence, while these policies and programmes may appear to be helping 'curatively', they may in reality be merely cosmetic.

There are several studies conducted in different sectors such as agriculture, industry, services as well as environment, which suggest that one needs to look not just at their outcomes, but at the very policies or programmes directed towards poverty as well as the methodology of their implementation. What is produced, for whom, with what technology, pricing policies, export/import policies and through what mecha-

nisms they are derived, as well as 'put on the ground' contain built-in 'differentiating' if not discriminating impulses. And it is women and the environmentalists who are coming up with the most constructive but fundamental critiques of current development theory and practice.

Those who have been looking at various strategies to ensure the advancement of poor women or reduce their burdens are increasingly dissatisfied with the equal shares approach or even an approach which seeks to redress gender imbalances. There is a growing sense that women need to be involved not merely in articulating demands but in actually designing development. To achieve this, one will have to re-scrutinize the space occupied by women, both in the economy and in the family. One will have to reconsider the livelihood strategies as well as choices in terms of alternative allocation that are available to them.

In the literature on rethinking development, there is insufficient analysis of the relationship between trends in women's economic and social status, and trends in the mainstream economy. There is also not enough analysis of factors that generate economic growth and the consequences of such growth on the status of women. So far, the linkage between the structure of the economy and women's status has not been made. Certain trends have been charted, but these are mainly recognized in male-female terminology. It is necessary to go beyond gender based comparisons and concentrate on the relationship of women with the economy.

I believe, though this may not have any place in the atmosphere of structural adjustment, that the experience of women in the development process reveals many useful theoretical strategies and methodological insights which would help redesign development itself. In fact, there should be a 'women's plan for national development' or a 'women's perspective for global development', rather than an approach which talks of a plan for women within a national or global development plan or, as it is usually called, 'a national plan for women's development'.

### Issues in taxation

M. GOVINDA RAO

TAX reform is a universal phenomenon. In their urge to minimize distortionary effects, most countries have undertaken reforms in their tax systems from time to time. In developing countries alone, there have been over one hundred identifiable attempts at major tax reforms since the mid-1940s (Gillis, 1919). In many countries, reforms are undertaken to minimize distortionary effects of taxes in order to keep the manufacturing sector internationally competitive. However, more often, tax reform is initiated in response to a fiscal crisis to phase out fiscal deficits and the objective of such reforms is merely to raise the revenue productivity of the tax system. Considering the seriousness of fiscal imbalance and tax induced distortions in the production structure in India, a detailed review and reform of the tax system is opportune.

In spite of differences in the details of tax reforms from country to country, the reform experiences highlight

some important general lessons. Although substantial progress has been made in building analytical foundations for the design of optimal tax systems, this approach has not been found to be operational. The major reasons for this lie in the insurmountable information requirements to estimate demand and supply elasticities and the inability of the model to incorporate administrative costs. In the event, on a practical plane, the 'best practice approach' has continued to be applied. This approach attempts to make the tax system simpler, more neutral and acceptable. Broadening the tax base, levying taxes at lower and less differentiated rates, eliminating the taxes on inputs, creating an efficient and honest administrative machinery and proper information system are some of the common features of tax reform seen across countries.

In India too, the need to phase out fiscal imbalances and reduce inefficiencies in the production structure has motivated the initiation of a tax reform process in the Union budget for 1992-93. In order to identify the direction of reforms,

<sup>\*</sup>The author is grateful to J.V.M. Sarma and T.S. Rangamannar for useful comments

however, it is necessary to understand the major issues pertaining to the Indian tax structure.

In terms of both the level of taxes and their growth, the performance of the Indian tax system must be considered quite satisfactory. At about 17% of GDP, the tax ratio in India is appreciably higher than the average (12% for countries at a comparable level of development. In fact, the tax ratio showed an impressive rise from 9% in the early 1960s to 17% in 1990-91.

However, the trends in tax revenue present two disconcerting features. First, since the mid-1980s the tax ratio has been virtually stagnant and even to maintain this ratio, it was necessary to resort to substantial discretionary measures every year. Second, the increase in tax ratio over the years has been accompanied by a change in the structure of tax which cannot be considered efficient or equitable.

A major undesirable feature discernible in the evolution of the Indian tax structure is the sharp increase in the share of indirect taxes in general, and of import duties in particular. This, in fact, is contrary to the general experience of tax structure change noticed in other developing countries. The share of direct taxes, rather than increasing with development, has declined steadily. At the time planning was launched, direct taxes contributed 40% of total revenues, but by 1989-90, their share was just about 12%. It is notable that the share of central direct taxes declined sharply to reach 17.7% in 1989-90 even though the Long Term Fiscal Policy (India, 1985) set the target of raising it to 22.3%. Presently, personal income tax forms less than 1% of GDP and the contribution of land revenue is only 0.14%. In fact, the ratio of personal and corporate taxes to non-agricultural income in the mid-1980s was found to be the same as in 1930-31 (Chelliah, 1989)!

The share of customs, in contrast, increased from about 14% of revenues in the early 1960s to over 23% by 1989-90. This also contrasts quite sharply with the generally observed behaviour of the steadily

declining share in international trade taxes, as the share of taxes on domestic production and trade increases in the transitional stage of development (Hinrichs, 1966).

Modern tax theory suggests that an optimal direct-indirect tax-mix for any country depends upon its specific circumstances and this should be determined on the basis of welfare implications of alternative levies (Ahmed and Stern, 1991). Yet, in an economy with structural rigidities and market imperfections of all kinds and with the wages of public servants indexed, revenue raising through indirect taxes does not constitute an efficient method of transferring revenues to the public sector (Rakshit, 1987). What is more, the tax structure in India is riddled with other distortions and complexities, as can be seen in the discussion that follows.

Lax systems in developing countries are conditioned by their inherent structural characteristics. The predominance of the traditional sector, low literacy levels, weak information system and powerful nonrepresentative \coalitions1 pose severe constraints in evolving broadbased, simple and less distorting tax systems (Newbery, 1987). In the Indian context, in addition, the large requirements of plan financing, greater emphasis on vertical equity in the tax system and implementation of fiscal policy in a multilevel decisionmaking framework too have contributed to the shaping of the prevailing tax structure in no small measure. It is important to highlight the salient features of the tax structure thus evolved for identifying directions for reform.

Narrow Tax Base: The existence of a large unorganized economy, weak information base and powerful non-representative coalitions result in narrow coverage in both direct and indirect taxes. In the case of personal income tax, the non-inclusion of tax on agricultural incomes leaves out over 30% of GDP from the tax base altogether and adminis-

trative difficulties render the taxation of a large part of the unorganized sector income virtually impossible even in the non-agricultural sector. Again, within the organized sector, exemptions and deductions for various purposes and payments of. income in kind in the form of perquisites provide large avenues for avoidance. The difficulties in extending tax to the 'hard-to-tax' groups due to the virtual absence of an accurate information system, weak administration and enforcement machinery, result in widespread and growing volume of tax evasion (Acharya et. al., 1986).

In the case of corporate entities, the generous deductions allowed for depreciation, reinvestment and for a wide variety of 'social' purposes exclude a sizeable portion of their earnings from the corporation tax base. Similarly, indirect taxes are confined mainly to manufactured commodities, and services are simply not included in the tax base at all. Even in the case of retail general sales taxes leviable by the states, the gradual shift towards the first point levy, ostensibly for administrative convenience, leaves out the entire value added at subsequent stages so that, in effect, the tax as it is presently levied, can neither be termed 'general' nor 'retail'. In addition to these, the non-representative coalitions are able to determine a favourable legal framework and judicial system which further erodes the tax base.

Distortionary Taxes: The pressure to finance the ever-increasing consumption and investment requirements of the public sector has placed undue emphasis on raising revenue ignoring the distortionary effects of the levies. Given that the tax base was not large, revenue requirements necessitated high average tax rates of both direct and indirect taxes. The emphasis on equity, besides, led to confiscatory levels of marginal tax rates in the case of personal income tax with severe disincentive effects on work effort, saving and investment. A clear instance of raising

<sup>1. &#</sup>x27;Non-representative' or 'distributional' coalition is taken to mean a narrow special interest group having disproportionate organization power for collective action (Olson, 1982).

<sup>2.</sup> The enactment of rent control laws and the judgements resulting in taking controlled rent to determine rental value for property tax purposes, even when the actual rent is higher, is a case in point.

revenues disregarding the economic consequences is the use of import' duties as a source of revenue rather than a protective instrument.

Similarly, at the state level, the levy of sales tax on inter-state trade does not take note of adverse economic consequences it gives rise to. Likewise, raising tax revenue from administratively convenient points has resulted in the imposition of commodity taxation on inputs, outputs and capital goods alike at the central, state and even local levels. This has severely distorted the tax structure besides rendering to the tax system a lack of transparency and simplicity.

Complicated Tax Structure: For several reasons, the Indian tax structure has become unduly complicated. A major reason for this is the pursuit of multiple objectives besides raising revenue, through the instrument of tax policy. The traditional emphasis on vertical equity—of 'levelling down' the incomes of the rich—has led to minute rate differentiation in both direct and indirect tax structures on the basis of policy makers' judgements on welfare levels across income classes and consumption patterns. Also, tax policy has been employed as a tool to fulfil a host of other objectives namely, encourage savings, promote invest-ment particularly in the 'desired' industries (through differentiated investment allowance), maximize employment (through concessions to the small-scale sector), promote inter-regional equity (through differentiated tax concessions across regions) and promote several other social objectives. The resulting tax structure can only be characterized as 'archaic'.

t is, however, doubtful whether these intended multitude objectives can be effectively achieved. Vertical equity attempted on less than 1% of population who actually pay personal income tax, even allowing for a realistic dependency ratio, is not very meaningful. Similarly, the introduction of highly differentiated commodity tax rates on the basis of perceived judgements about income elasticity of demand for commodities is not the ideal way to bring about redistribution. The internatio-

nal experience, in fact, points towards the desirability of shifting the strategy from 'levelling down' the incomes of the rich to 'levelling up' to ameliorate the relative impoverishment through active expenditure policies (Gillis, 1989).

Also, studies have cast doubts on the effectiveness of tax concessions in enhancing the level of savings (Das-Gupta, 1989). Unsuitability of the tax policy in achieving the goals of employment generation, balanced regional development and a wide variety of other social objectives has also been highlighted in the literature (Bagchi and Nayak, 1990).

The politics of tax evasion and avoidance is another important reason for complexity in the tax structure. Attempts to secure tax exemptions and concessions by politically powerful groups and the constant competition between the taxpayers to create loopholes and the tax authorities to plug them have rendered the tax system extremely complicated.

Federalism and Tax Policy: In addition to the issues of tax design usually faced in developing countries, the fiscal decentralization in a federal polity can be an additional source of distortion and inequity. Severe tax competition among sub-central units and inter-jurisdictional tax exportation can sharply distort the tax structures of the central as well as sub-central units. Both practices are widespread in India, particularly in the case of the states' sales taxes. The states compete with one another either to maximize revenues or to attract industrial activity by lowering tax rates and according concessions on inputs and outputs. In the event, many a time tax rates are determined not by considerations of efficiency and equity but in the course of oligopolistic gains. In fact, this has led to a bizarre situation wherein colour television sets and passenger cars' are subjected lower tax rates than foodgrains (Bagchi and Nayak, 1990)!

Another source of tax distortion in a federal polity arises from interjurisdictional tax exportation. For example, even where the taxes are designed on the destination principle input taxation can result in the exportation of the tax burden to residents of other states. In addition, in the Indian situation, the states can actually levy a tax on inter-state sale leading to significant levels of tax exportation from more advanced producing states to poorer consuming states. This has not only segregated the economy into several tariff zones within the country, but has also caused severe inter-regional inequity (Rao, 1992).

In the Indian context, the constitutional arrangement on tax devolution too is alleged to have distorted the tax structure. As substantial proportions of revenue from personal income tax and Union excise duties are transferred to the states on the recommendation of finance commissions, the centre tends to concentrate on non-sharable revenue sources such as customs duty and administered price increases to raise revenues.3 Thus, import duty is employed as a source of revenue rather than as a protective instrument; and the administered prices of public monopolies do not get aligned to the excise duty structure as the centre tends to concentrate more on the former to raise revenues.

Although substantial progress has been made in designing optimal tax systems to minimize welfare losses, the enormous data requirements to estimate supply and demand elasticities and the practical problems of administration and compliance, have necessitated continued reliance on the best practice approach' to tax reform. This approach attempts to make the tax system less distortionary by broadening the tax base, levying lower and less differentiated tax rates, simplifying the tax structure, exempting the taxes on inputs and strengthening tax administration and enforcement.

The Tax Reforms Committee (TRC) appointed to make recommendations for rationalizing and simplifying the tax structure has already submitted its interim report. The thrust of

<sup>3.</sup> According to the recommendations of the Ninth Finance Commission, 85% of the net proceeds of individual income tax and <45% of gross revenue from basic Union excise duties are transferred to the state government.

its recommendations is broadly in conformity with the best practice approach (India, 1991). The emphasis in the recommendations is to expand the tax base and levy lower and less differentiated tax rates to fulfil horizontal equity rather than having a highly progressive rate structure on a narrow tax base. Raising revenue is taken to be the main objective of direct and domestic indirect taxes. Restructuring of import duties is recommended to make it primarily a protective instrument.

In the case of domestic indirect taxes too, the emphasis is on expanding the tax base by including important services in the tax net and extending the tax to the wholesale stage. Conversion of specific to ad valorem rates in respect of a number of commodities is to improve revenue productivity and give stability to the tax system. The TRC has also recommended the adoption of a number of measures in this decade to rationalize and simplify the tax system. There are also important recommendations on revenue sharing and tax harmonization.

However, the committee is yet to deal with the details of corporate income tax, import duty and excise duty structures. The full evaluation of the recommendations, therefore, has to await the detailed recommendations on the structure of these taxes as also on tax administration and enforcement. Considering the prevailing complexity in the tax system, a lot more needs to be done to simplify the tax structure, improve the information system and strengthen tax administration. But the committee's recommendations can be a useful starting point.

Admittedly, a reform of the tax structure, its administration and enforcement is critical in the sequence of policy reforms for structural adjustment. However, the existing structure itself is the outcome of policies resulting from the pursuit of special interests by the distributional coalitions and there is no reason for these groups to be interested in tax reform. This is particularly true when tax reform implies tax increase. The only way by which successful reforms can be introduced is to

pose tax reform as an alternative to more painful adjustment processes.

Again, it may be necessary to conceptually separate reforms which are politically difficult from those that are politically infeasible and concentrate on the former for pragmatic considerations. In such a case, however, the reform that would result will be piecemeal and, at best, incremental rather than principled and comprehensive. If the reforms introduced in the Union budget for 1992-93 are any indication, the probability of this outcome appears to be very high.

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## Banking blues

R. P. GURPUR

THE first signs of the liberal economic policy ushered in by the Narasimha Rao government on the banking scene have been disastrous. Were it not for the crippling damage it has caused to the system, the stock market scam and the ingenuity with which a clever stock market manipulator took the banks for a ride may well have evoked admiration, Harshad Mehta's exploits are symptomatic of the decay and the rot that have for long been hidden under the veneer of false bravado and sophistication that banks outwardly exhibit.

Private greed over public good has been the one notable feature of Indian economics, as it is with her politics and social set-up. That major banks like the State Bank of India (SBI), the largest in the public sector and the only Indian bank in the world league, stand exposed by their greed for money, says it all.

sBI is by far the best organized and comparatively better administered bank. But even it does not seem immune to the decay that has set in. The fact that some foreign banks have been caught in the Harshad Mehta scandal should not come as a surpise. If anything, they have set a bad example for development banking and generated envy and a self-destructive urge to copy their ways, particularly among young bankers.

It is shocking that RBI's inadequacy, incompetence, negligence and colonial mentality have received hardly any attention in reviews or discussions of Indian banking. It has allowed its autonomy and independence to be eroded by the political masters in Delhi. Successive governors—and this includes Manmohan Singh—have had to fall in line and can even be accused of complicity. The only time RBI's authority and its governor's status was regarded as being important was when Professor Madhu Dandavate was Finance Minister in the hopelessly muddled Janata Dal government.

But at least by their shockingly knavish behaviour, criminal collusion and/or negligence in the Harshad Mehta affair, the banks have finally exposed themselves. It could, however, prove quite expensive to the 'public' owners, as the ultimate loss in terms of money may run into hundreds, if not thousands, of crores. On the stock market it will have afflicted a crippling blow, which could be anything between Rs. 50,000 to 800,000 crores in market capitalization. This loss will be suffered mainly by the investors. Even if the banks and mutual funds suffer massive losses, in the ultimate analysis it is the depositors (owners) and investors who will be the poorer.

Why have banks reduced them-selves to such a pitiable situation? A major fundamental problem is the politicization of banking, with the ruling parties at the centre misusing it for their partisan ends. From 1969, when Indira Gandhi first used the nationalization of major banks as a weapon for her political survival, till late last year when the Narasimham committee was set up and changes that the World Bank/ IMF dictated became unavoidable for a country begging for massive financial assistance, banks were exploited wholesale by ruling politicians, bureaucrats who tasted power as big bosses and politically wellconnected industrialist-opportunists.

Credit disbursal under political pressure and its appropriation by interested parties has led to the degeneration of over Rs. 22,000 crores into non-performing assets, with over Rs. 6,500 crores being locked up in sick industries and more than Rs. 500 crores being written off every year as bad debt. In the middle of April 1992, all scheduled commercial banks had a total of over Rs. 131,115 crores as outstanding advance of which over Rs 500 crores were bad or doubtful. In other words, nearly one-fourth of the credit given is in the doldrums. And

the loans that have been written off, including the political ones, have already taken their toll, though eveyone concerned is being coy about the real extent of the damage.

Janardhana Poojary, as the Minister of State for Finance, GOI, the votary of 'loan melas' who singlehandedly wrecked the banking sector, used to justify this fad on the grounds that big businessmen and industrialists created huge bad debts, so why grudge the poor a little piece of the cake. Queer as the argument is, implicit in it is the admission of helplessness to prevent the vested interests from milking the banking industry. The steady erosion in the quality of debts (assets) for over two decades has now become truly alarming, eating into the vitals of the banking sector. The Narasimham committee has recommended the creation of a fund, with an initial injection of Rs. 500 crores by the government. But this would be taking simplistic view of the problem. Unless our convoluted and timeconsuming legal system is changed to enable quick action for seizing assets and personal guarantees and take criminal action against those deliberately milking industries to sickness, such large-scale defaults will continue.

Loss of income and eventually, the loss of credit money is one of the main reasons that push banks into taking shortcuts, as in the Mehta scam. The stiff Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR), and Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR), and the periodically enforced partial freezing of incremental deposits, which between them impound nearly half the working funds, leave little leeway for making profits. Further, low-yielding priority credit, including export finance, and the ridiculously low differential rate of interest for loans to the poor, leave about 55 to 60% of the loanable funds to better-yielding credit. Banks thus increasingly resort to investment jugglery and bill discounting for earnings.

The slogan of profitability has put new pressure on an already delicate situation. Banks are finding themselves under-capitalized, and those that are already making losses have aggravated this position further. The Narasimham committee's remedy, of increasing capital within three to four years to 8% of the working funds-in keeping with international standards—is therefore very welcome. It is to be noted that some banks are virtually in a negative capital situation as, for example, the UCO Bank, which must have been desperate to woo Harshad Mehta. Its Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) Margabandhu's argument that it was a desperate attempt to get out of a desperate situation has an inescapable element of truth. However, the scandal cannot be excused, particularly sur's involvement, notwithstanding the protestations of innocence by its CMD Goiporia.

Even more unpardonable is the recklessness of the National Housing Bank. It is a direct subsidiary of the RBI, though it had an outsider as Chairman, the late M.J. Pherwani who, after his heady days of stewardship in the Unit Trust of India (UTI) obviously could not reconcile himself to staid housing projects! He was an ardent votary of the philosophy of market forces, and advocated deregulating stock exchanges. All it led to was the ruination of the very open market forces philosophy he advocated. Together, the dramatic personae have set the clock back and shattered investor confidence.

The Prime Minister's statement that development cannot be left entirely to the mercy of market forces only reflects the inescapable reality of the Indian situation. Over six decades ago, the Congress party had propagated public ownership of banks. And rightly so, at least for one important reason—in a backward agro-based poor country, credit is essential for improving the rural economy. After independence, the emphasis subtly shifted to the cooperative sector. However, largely due to political expediency, Indira Gandhi, gave it a doctrinaire veneer of social control and public ownership when she decided to nationalize 14 major banks in July 1969. But it undoubtedly benefited the rural economy and priority sectors like agriculture, road transport, smallscale industry, small business and the like. 'Social banking' and 'from class to mass banking' were not mere slogans. They did a great deal of good to the economically

and socially weaker sections, who under private ownership of banking received little help, except from some banks that originated in the west coast.

Indian banking has grown into the largest service sector of its kind in the world. There have been impressive gains: from less than 9000 bank branches (of which over 7700 were those of 28 public sector banks) in 1969, the total number of branches increased to 60,519 by September 1994. Deposits increased multifold to Rs. 13,1100 crores. During the same period, staff strength increased from less than 10,000 to about a million. In fact, banking is one sector that has always provided a large number of jobs. If one adds the cooperative sector, regional rural banks and term-ending financial institutions, the scale of credit disbursal is enormous. Despite its inefficiency, this achievement is not insignificant.

Roughly about half of the number of bank branches are in rural areas, where the banking habit has now spread. But the distortion of rural development vis a vis urban success can be guaged by one single fact—a hundred towns in the country account for 70% of all bank deposits and 65% of all bank credit. The growth is indeed lopsided. Even among the towns, big cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Madras, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Kanpur take the lion's share.

The credit to deposit ratio is quite high in states that are traditionally advanced in agriculture and industry, like Maharashtra, Punjab and Tamilnadu, while backward states or parts thereof, like Orissa, the north-eastern states, UP and Bihar have a poor ratio. Balanced growth has not been possible because fundamentally, Indian society itself suffers from massive distortions. With all the five years plans, not only has there never been a national credit policy, there is not even a worthwhile agriculture policy in a country where it is considered to be the primary sector. Indeed even industry. the secondary sector, has not developed to the extent it should have. The tertiary sector seems to have done better than both.

The social and developmental orientation sought to be given to banking has been partly successful. It has undoubtedly improved the quality of life for millions of people. But the shortcomings and defects of the society are reflected in the banking sector as well. Where the general level of education, administrative culture and social leadership have been better, banking services have been more effective and have had a demonstrative impact. Andhra, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, Karnataka and a few other areas illustrate this. Where political leadership has been bad, as for example in Bihar and eastern UP, banking services have been inefficient, slothful and corrupt.

n a situation where available credit is always short of demands on it, unless there is an equitable and rational credit plan, the scarce credit is naturally monopolized by the influential and powerful. It also encourages graft and corruption. Within a very short time, the corrupt land development and cooperative society culture had made inroads into the rural credit pattern of commercial banks.

But more dangerous is the subversion of the system by the big guns. The unholy nexus between the top echelons of banks, politically powerful people, bureaucrats and big business virtually throttled banking, draining the major part of its resources. This is the most serious failure of the banking industry. The other major failure has been in their housekeeping, frauds and misappropriation being never-ending phenomena. Several thousand officials, including those at the top, have been involved in these frauds, the latest and by far the most serious of them being the present Mehta scam, which may finally end up ruining many banks and individuals.

Quick growth combined with the lack of a continuing organizational/industrial culture, brought a host of problems, the quality of manpower being the major one. The second wave of nationalization in 1980 comprised 14 banks, including eight more from the SBI group, bringing about 90% of banking under its purview. The balance was shared by

the remaining private sector and foreign banks operating in India. Given this furious pace of expansion it is hardly surprising that not much attention was paid to quality in the recruitment of additional staff.

Even in the private sector, labour unions had established a vice-like grip, severely restricting direct recruitment, even at junior officer level. The result was that hardly 20 to 25% of junior officer staff could be directly recruited; the rest were promoted internally. A large number of peons were raised to the level of clerks and supervisors. Even minimum requirements like legible handwriting were compromised. As banking spread and its needs became more complex. there ought to have been a greater inflow of fresh talent. This did not happen. The overemphasis on seniority, and a smug knowledge of protection for those rising from the ranks, even when indulging in misdeeds and indiscipline, demoralized middle level management.

Comparatively better educated and, at least in the initial stages, better paid bank staff have no justification for militancy, much less for perpetrating what are virtually crimes in the name of militant trade unionism. Though foreign banks operating in India have the same disadvantage as far as clerks, peons, watchmen, etcetera are concerned, they do not have to put up with union interference at the officer level. To that extent, they enjoy greater freedom. They could there-fore do much better than Indian banks, which they did, except for the BCCI scandal and the current scam. It may be worth noting that even in foreign banks, much of the top staff who seem to have colluded with the likes of Harshad Mehta are Indian. In other words, they come from the same stock, and the veneer of sophistication has not blunted their native genius!

No matter what open door policy is followed, if organized labour imposes restrictive practices, the liberalization can hardly be successful. The most vocal opposition to the Narasimham committee's report has come from the unions. Their ire is primarily focused on the 'hire and fire' and exit policies. Security of

service and disregard of productivity norms are sacred to the labour in India, banking being no exception. They are naturally upset over anything that questions their right to secure tenure and the absence of productivity and accountability. But with the economy being in the state it is in, this attitude has come under renewed attack.

A virtual halt to fresh recuritment since the last few years, scrapping of 'contract overtime' initiated during the Emergency, and the building resistance to interference by unions in management areas etcetera, have slowly begun to impact. The multiplicity of unions owing allegiance to different political parties, equally militant officers' unions, lack of genuine demands and internal quarrels have steadily eroded the power of the unions. But they still have enormous nuisance value and capacity for mischief. The resistance to mechanization and computerization has perhaps had the most effect on banking.

There was a time when the overmilitant comrades from Bengal would not allow even a local transfer. In the United Bank of India. for instance, a transfer from one floor of the office to another led to a prolonged strike. The chief executive had to work with his office fortified by security guards. In some states like West Bengal, UP, Bihar, and Kerala, personal harrassment and even violence against the higher officers was rampant. But now, in the name of redeployment of surplus staff, the unions sign on the dotted line. They obviously realize that they can hardly expect to flourish if the industry itself has to fight for survival.

With 'better counsel dawning', there is a distinct possibility that other questions that need to be sorted out may also be raised. For example, convenient hours for the public (i.e. working in shifts), more work (it is ridiculous that in a poor country like India, bank staff work for six and a half hours on five days and four hours on the sixth, totalling 36.5 hours a week, with a plethora of public holidays and various catagories of leave thrown in), better productivity and greater mobility.

Active trade unionism has given birth to other reprehensible practices as well. A few activists do trade union work during office hours without authorization but with the knowledge and implicit approval of the respective managements. Most banks tolerate this indefensible practice. The local union bosses are generally busybodies who interfere in everything. In other words, salary and perks are provided by the banks for doing union work! This 'privilege' may hopefully disappear in the changed atmosphere. In any case, no self-respecting union ought to resort to such unethical behaviour. Instead, they should contribute to the right type of work culture, educate their members of their responsibility and help in rural development. They should also be on guard against wrongdoing and misuse/abuse of power by managements.

Deveral banks suffer from a surfeit of staff, particularly at the middle and higher levels, who work according to the Peter principle. R. K. Talwar of the SBI, that brilliant banker who was hounded during the Emergency by Sanjay Gandhi and his coterie, solved this by a simple mechanism. Those middleaged men who had lost what little dynamism they possessed and were coming in the way of younger, brighter and more talented, innovative officers, were all 'promoted' with impressive titles and shunted to decorative offices to oversee and advise'. The protocol was meticulously observed but the real work of 'innovative banking' was done by those who had something to contribute. Notwithstanding the present misfortune of SBI, it has indeed charted out innovative paths in banking. Special and exclusive branches dealing with agriculture industry and foreign exchange are some of its successful achievements, as is the setting up of rural development projects and trusts.

The challenges of development and social banking served to bring the innovativeness of at least some banks to the fore. The singular success of the lead bank scheme contributed immeasurably to the spread of banking in backward areas. To meet the special needs of the rural poor,

regional rural banks (RRB) were set up. There are about 200 such banks with 25 to 30 branches each. But 80% of these banks run at a perpetual loss, eroding the capital contibuted by the state and central governments, and sponsoring banks. With operational costs being the same as big banks, they have been sick virtually from birth. A government that boldly wants to withdraw the subsidy on fertilizers and food should also have the courage to reconsider the RRB situation.

The Narasimham committee's recommendation is to hand over these banks to a subsidiary. A better option would be to merge them with the sponsoring banks, amalgamate some of the branches with more economic working units and dispense with those that are absolutely worthless. In places where the cooperative institutions are particularly strong, these ought to be strenthened and encouraged further. Farmers' service cooperatives (res) are the real answer in most cases, not the proliferation of high-cost banking.

Given the several constraints, inflexible policy guidelines and suffocating controls that the Indian banking system works under, it should be a matter of surprise and also celebration if it does not deteriorate any further. Deposit interest rates pegged at utterly unrealistic levels—till about two years ago the maximum rate on term deposits was 10% p.a., which is now 13% p.a.—and credit given at cheap rates (priority credit at 10 to 14% p.a., export credit still cheaper and large advances at 16 to 18% p.a.) gave rise to a ridiculous situation. Monetary discipline as it was administered by the RBI was a disaster. In the process the government helped itself to cheap funds under the guise of government securities towards SLR, and ran up a riotous rate of inflation. In both monetary and fiscal measures, a profligate government and a pliable RBI did more damage to the banking sector than anybody else. The emperor was indeed naked, but no one had the guts to say sol

To the extent that these measures were released from artificial bondage cannot but do good to banking. Raising equity capital from the mar-

ket is increasingly more profitable, as is being discovered by big units. In fact, in the new equity cult, they benefited more by way of free funds available till equity allotments were made and refunds issued. Both the companies and banks made profits by such free funds cleverly retained for three to six months. Institutional morality is generally low in this country, and at the root of the recent stock market scam was perhaps the greed that sprang from such free equity application funds. Together with the clever ruse of mutual funds, whose operations had none of the regulatory measures like those on the banks, greater harm was done. It may therefore be advisable to re-examine the activities that banks are allowed to participate in. It would be a better idea to restrict banks to banking services only, and without compromising their competitiveness, entrust other financial activities to more appropriate institutions. A healthy equity cult can complement banking operations; speculations and manipulations can-

The RBI's control of monetary policies through impounding a large portion of the working funds. the call money market mechanism (which has a very high rate of borrowing by banks), credit curbs and the introduction of deposit certificates (CD) and commercial papers (cP) by big companies are among some of the measures that have systematically affected banking. Too many things are sought be achieved, overburdening a simultaneously banking system which is being crushed under endless experimentation. Too many and too frequent changes in refinance and emphasis on particular credit lines have kept the banks on tenterhooks. The slavish dependence on the government and RBI for all sorts of policy decisions, interference by the government and puppet boards of directors with workers' representatives keen to feather their own nest of partisan interests, allow but little autonomy and scope for dynamic initiative.

Over two decades of mismanagement and misrule have harmed the system, but not irretrievably. The opening of doors, at it were, by the compulsions of survival, is

sure to hasten the positive revival of banking in India. The possibilities for improvement are enormous. With all its imperfections, the Narasimham committee's recommendations can be a sound basis for reforms.

It is perhaps too late to make wholesale changes now. But restricting the number of banks of an all-India nature to just a few, and redesignating others as regional/ zonal banks, with those in very bad shape amalgamating with the better ones, is not only possible but also desirable. A rational branch policy would lead to the relocation of branches to under-banked and unbanked centres. The overt urban bias and congestion in big cities ought to, and hopefully will, be changed. Consolidation rather than unbridled expansion should get priority, as also a honest review and introspection of each one's comparative strong and weak points.

The possibility of losing jobs and promotional opportunities may lead to better trade union behaviour and change their negative attitude towards operational hours and services, leading to greater productivity, better customer service, and greater participation in realizing social goals. After all, there's nothing like self-interest for motivation! Less control in favour of policy guide-lines, abolition of the banking department at the centre and a nonpartisan constitution of boards are a must. RBI's autonomy, role as a guide, and policy-making functions should be strengthened. RBI itself can do with a strong dose of reform. Its own customer service is no better than that of the commercial banks, and its trade unionism is even worse. In its currency division, for example, work norms are so low that the staff work only for a few hours and then walk off.

Audit and inspection will now hopefully improve. If the Mehta scandal has not taught us even that, then banking in this country will never learn. A separate audit, inspection and vigilance machinery for the industry is a distinct possibility. Greater computerization and technological innovations to meet the everincreasing demands of the industry

—the staggering cheque clearing operations of the banks is a case in point—coupled with greater professionalism are also needed.

Competition, innovation and reward for better work and results are the positive aspects of an open market economy. Market forces however are not everything. India's needs and demands are peculiar to itself. To compare them with other developed countries and adopt their yardsticks would be foolish, even fatal. There is no escape from priority credit deployment. But it need not be, subsidized and its actual cost should always be recovered. Profit-making for a viable existence is not the same as profiteering. And credit judgement, if allowed to be objective, can turn around our much-maligned banking system.

he endless talk about decentralization is difficult to swallow in an environment nurtured on feudalism and paternalism. Efforts should nevertheless be made and a more dynamic organizational ethos cultivated to meet the challenges and needs of the times. Of late, several banks have been operating in areas like subsidiary services for house building, estate and property management with a trusteeship service, venture capital, factoring, merchant banking and syndication. These are better left to others who specialize in them.

Ambitious industrialists are said to be on the look-out for taking over private sector banks. With its one foray into a stock scam, the Bank of Karad is already in the process of being wound up. If the Ambanis, the Modis, the Goenkas, the Chabrias and others of their tribe want to stray into banking, let them in by all means. But let them burn their own fingers and not those of others.

The idea of economic liberalization with the market forces levelling enterprises is no doubt an attractive one. But a vital sector like banking should see these changes as opportunities to do even better for the community. The largest good to the largest number is a concept handed down in India from Vedic times. The banks should adopt this as their motto and guiding principle.

# Environmental implications

LAWRENCE SURENDRA

IN March 1985, in the first quarter of the first year of the Rajiv Gandhi era, a seminar on 'Alternative Economic Structures' (the papers were published in 1989 under the same title as a book by Allied Publishers) was organized at the Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla. P.V. Narasimha Rao, then a Union Minister in the Cabinet of Rajiv Gandhi, delivered the valedictory address, in which he recounted an episode from the 1950s. Referring to the resolution on the Socialistic Pattern of Society which was passed by Parliament and which the Congress had to accept at its Avadi meeting, he mentioned the fact that a couple of months before Avadi he and some others decided to get the

resolution passed at a Pradesh Congress Committee meeting. They were overruled by some who felt that for various reasons it was not acceptable.

However, according to Narasimha Rao, 'two months later, all these gentleman who had opposed the resolution went to Avadi and came back full socialists! So the manner in which things were ultimately accepted without question, without debate, without brainstorming, created a scare in some persons and I was one of those'. One wonders what Rao would have to say about the way the recently concluded Tirupati session of the Congress was conducted, that too with him in the saddle as Presi-

dent. This especially in relation to the discussion on the new economic policy.

At Tirupati in April 1992, there was a deliberate overcrowding of the agenda, with organizational elections hitched alongside 'discussions' on the resolution on the new economic policy. The Tirupati Congress conclave only confirmed what many have long suspected, that there is a deliberate attempt to prevent any debate on the new economic policy, a policy that Manmohan Singh and company are surreptitiously foisting on this country. It is frightening to contemplate the long-term consequences of what is being thrust on us by a few technocrats who remain convinced of the 'correctness' of their policy initiatives. They thus see no need for any public debate and accordingly ensured there was no debate at Tirupati. In the process, they also prevented debate and discussion in society at large. It is in such a kind of impasse and rather frustrating state of affairs that one has to consider vital questions concerning the safeguarding of our resources and endowments, especially our natural resources and wealth.

Juestions regarding our natural resources and heritage become critical when we consider that the present economic policy changes are a result of 'a forced integration to the world economy', and not one that emerged out of our desire or choice to be part of some benign process called 'globalization'. For poor developing countries like ours, there is and will be no benign process called 'globalization' under the present oppressive new world order'. Carla Hills had said long ago that debt is the crowbar with which economies will be wrenched open. Having become a major debtor nation, India is now witnessing its economy being wrenched open. This 'wrenching open' determines the speed and content of 'opening up', 'liberalization' and 'privatization', and gives us little choice to determine the speed at which we want to take any or all of these three policy initiatives. If, therefore, our policy-makers behave as though they are in a sort of a coma, we need not be surprised. This has very far-reaching implications for the future of our natural heritage and resources. One might even ask whether they have a future at all.

As it is, we are sitting on some kind of ecological time bomb that is quietly ticking away, given the range of ecological, environmental and natural resource erosion problems we are already faced with. According to an internal document prepared in March 1992 by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, titled 'National Conservation Strategy and Policy Statement on Environment and Development', the following are some of the problems listed in the document. To quote:

'Even today, over 250 million children, women and men suffer from under-nutrition: The scenario for the coming years is alarming and we are likely to face a food crisis unless we are in a position to increase crop and animal productivity on a continuing basis, since the only option open to us for increasing production is productivity improvement. Also, access to food will have to be ensured through opportunities for productive employment.

'A growth in domesticated animal population has been accompanied by a loss of area under grassland and pastures. Hardly 3.5% of our geographical area is under grasslands, while our domesticated animal population numbers nearly 500 million. The livelihood security of the majority of our people depends on land and water-based occupations such as crop and animal husbandry, forestry and fisheries.

'Out of a total area of about 329 million hectares, 175 million hectares of land require special treatment to restore such land to productive and profitable use. The degradation is caused by water and wind erosion (150 million ha), salinity and alkalinity (8 million ha) and river action and other factors (7 million ha).

'Our forest wealth is dwindling due to overgrazing, overexploitation both for commercial and household needs, encroachments, unsustainable practices including certain practices of shifting cultivation and developmental activities such as roads; buildings, irrigation and power projects.

'The recorded forest cover in the country is 75.01 million ha. which works out to 19.5% of the total geographical area against the broad national goal of 33% for the plains areas and 66% for hilly regions. Even within this area, only 11% constitute forests with 40% or more of crown cover. According to the State of Forest Report, 1989, the actual forest cover in the country was 64.01 million hectares during 1985-87 and the annual rate of loss works out to 47,500 hectares. The loss of habitat is leading to the extinction of plant, animal and microbial species. According to the Botanical and Zoological Surveys in India, over 1500 plant and animal species are in the endangered category.

'Our unique wetlands, rich in aquatic and bird life, providing food and shelter as also the breeding and spawning ground for the marine and fresh water fishes, are facing problems of pollution and overexploitation. The major rivers of the country are also facing problems of pollution and siltation. Our long coastline is under similar stress. Our coastal areas have been severely damaged due to indiscriminate construction near the water-line. Coastal vegetation, including mangroves and sea grasses, is getting denuded. Our mountain ecosystems are under threat of serious degradation. Extensive deforestation leading to the erosion of valuable topsoil is threatening the livelihood security of millions of hill people.

'Equally serious is the downstream effects of the damage done upstream. Indo-Gangetic agriculture, often described as a potential bread basket in the world, is being damaged beyond repair as a result of soil degradation. Some areas are facing problems of water-logging and rising water tables because of poorly planned and ill-executed irrigation. În other areas, the water table is receding because of overexploitation of ground water. Furthermore, the quality of ground water is being affected due to chemical pollution and in coastal areas, due to the ingress of sea water. The excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides impose

threat to human health, to the genetic stocks and reduce the natural soil fertility in the long run. The absence of an integrated land and water use policy for the country is taking a heavy toll on these basic natural assets.

'Coral reefs are the most productive marine ecosystems and provide a habitat for diverse flora and fauna. These ecosystems are adversely affected by indiscriminate exploitation of coral for production of lime, recreational use and for ornamental trade. Similarly, the fragile environs of island ecosystems have been subjected to pressures of various forms including migration of people from the mainland.

'Compounding these human-inflicted wounds on natural ecosystems and life-support mechanisms, we are facing serious problems of pollution and unsanitary conditions especially in urban areas. Pollution arising from toxic wastes and non-biodegradable consumer articles is tending to increase.

'A large number of industries and other development projects have been incorrectly sited, leading, on the one hand, to overcongestion and overpollution in our urban centres and on the other hand, to diversion of population and economic resources from the rural areas. This has also resulted in the pollution of most of our water bodies which are major constituents of our life support system. Pollution of water bodies, in turn, has adversely affected the growth of aquatic fauna and flora which is an environmentally undesirable phenomenon for any ecosystem. The problem of women in villages is compounded in this whole scenario of energy, environmental and developmental imbalance. The incidence of malaria is high in many parts of the country. Safe drinking water is still a luxury in many villages. Liver ailments and gastro-intestinal diseases are common due to unclean drinking water.'

By the government's own admission, we are facing a very serious situation vis-a-vis our environment and natural resources. Even though the government's document does

not explicitly acknowledge this, most of the problems are directly related to the pattern of economic growth in the past few years. In addition, one-dimensional growth, which is vulnerable to the vagaries of the international market, can only worsen the situation.

L he picture is not very rosy when one views the impact of liberalization and related economic policies in the context of critical areas like food production. Indications are that we are already heading for a crisis in the agricultural economy. Apart from the fact that after three good years, a poor monsoon is anticipated and will seriously affect food production, a depleting buffer stock and the shift to cash crops as a result of market-oriented policies all add up to produce a grim scenario on the food crops front. Presently, many parts of Maharashtra and Gujarat are in the grip of severe drought conditions, and it is likely that some more states will soon be in the same situation. Already the government has been forced to import one million tonnes of wheat in order to contain the wheat price.

These tendencies only serve to emphasize how critical and sensitive a variable natural resources are in the overall planning context. We cannot take them lightly, as unfortunately many of the economic liberalization strategies tend to do. Natural resource depletion or too fundamental shifts in natural resource use (like land for example) can have very serious implications in the long term, undermining the very viability of societies. Economic planners, like those in our country now obsessed with economic liberalization', pay absolutely no heed to questions of sustainable natural resource use, which in a way form the very basis for the future survival of nations.

All economic activity tends to view natural resources merely as a 'source' or 'sink' with no limits to either its yielding capacity as a source or its carrying capacity as a sink, till of course a disaster strikes. 'Economic liberalization' only increases the intensity of natural resource use both as a source and as a sink. The fish disease epidemic

that struck the waters of Kerala is a good illustration of this. The inland waters of Kerala are a very important source of protein in the Kerala diet. Last October the fish, especially in the Kuttanad area, were affected by a very peculiar epidemic known as the Ulcerative Disease Syndrome. The news about the diseased fish led to a sudden non-marketability of fish in Kerala thus affecting the livelihood of over 50,000 traditional fishermen. The likely reason for this epidemic is the fact that the inland waters are also used as a sink for wastes generated by other human economic activity. It is worth noting that around 281 million litres of industrial effluents of highly toxic chemicals, 40,000 tonnes of chemical fertilizers and 900 tonnes of pesticides used annually in an area of 60,000 hectares of paddy find their way into the water.

In general, fertilizer and pesticide use has increased significantly, particularly with the increase in plantation forests (teak etcetera) and hybrid export crops such as flowers and vegetables, all of which, given the intensity of cultivation, require very high doses of fertilizers and pesticides. Much of these chemicals leach into the ground water and through run off into the sea. Field researchers studying fishing villages on the east and west coasts indicate a decrease in fish catches. The development of tourism in areas such as Goa and the relaxation of environmental standards for hotels and resorts in order to garner 'tourist dollars', according to Ministry of Agriculture sources, is affecting the fish and prawn catch due to the presence of high levels of coliform and other pollutants. The prawn export industry that is growing very fast and is another major dollar earner, is equally affected by environmental pollution.

To give some idea of export values of such items as fruits and vegetables, flowers, marine products etcetera just for the period April 1991 to August 1991, the value of marine product export was in the order of Rs. 463 crores; fruits and vegetables amounted to Rs. 130 crores; processed fruits and juices Rs. 23.5 crores and floriculture products about Rs. 4.5 crores. Who will give

the value of what we constantly take from the soil in terms of high productivity and export values?

Other processes, again with very serious long-term consequences, are also evident and signal what is in store for us when we, in our shortsightedness, sacrifice our natural resources and heritage, whether as a source or as a sink, to the world economy. Two so-called success stories of industries that have registered phenomenal growth as a result of the 'economic liberalization' process are cases in point, and forewarn us of the dangers that we face in the context of long-term impacts of our present myopic economic policies.

First is the granite industry in the southern states of Tamilnadu and Andhra. As part of our 'opening up strategy, our granite resources are now part of the global demand of the building industries of Japan and other industrialized countries. In 1990-91, the rupee value of total granite exports was around Rs. 82.78 crores and in 1991-92 around Rs. 92.93 crores. This has resulted in a steady chopping up of the hills of Tamilnadu and Andhra, whose topography and landscape are being gradually but drastically changed. In the face of these developments, it may be worthwhile to consider the fact that the whole of peninsular India, south of the Vindyhas, is on a west to east tilt, which is why all peninsular rivers, except the Narmada, flow west to east. The states of Andhra and Tamilnadu are on the lower end of the west to east gradient. Rainfall run offs into the sea are the highest in this part of the country, with a rapid increase in soil erosion as a result of strong winds, and increasing severity of the floods and cyclones occurring in these regions.

Surely, the hills and rocky terrains of Tamilnadu and Andhra have some natural protective, ecosystem maintaining, stabilizing functions or perhaps they are not so important as the dollars they will earn in the calculations of our economic mandarins. So, even as the granite millionaires raze the hills, use child and other labour in extremely hazardous working conditions,

as they stash away their dollars, our government of exporters showers them with incentives and concessions.

he second classic case of how much more sacred foreign currency earnings are than our own rivers, ground water, soil and people, is that of the leather industry. The leather industry is the fourth largest item of India's exports, currently contributing 7 to 8% of total foreign exchange earnings and said to rank first from the angle of net foreign exchange earnings. For the period April 1991 to August 1991, the value of leather exports was to the tune of Rs. 1077 crores. It is also an industry that fits very well the suggestions made in the now famous Dirty Industry' memo of Lawrence Summers, the Chief Economist of the World Bank. As restrictions and environmental standards with regard to industries producing very toxic pollutants and effluents get more strict in the North, these industries then move South. The leather industry, whose effluent contains heavy metals such as chromium, is now witnessing a boom in India, especially in the traditional leather centres such as the North Arcot district in Tamilnadu

It is not an exaggeration to say that it will not be too long before districts such as North Arcot are declared disaster areas, unfit for human life. Given the very high levels of ground water poisoning and simultaneous depletion of fresh water and ground water sources by the leather industry which requires huge quantities of water, there is the possibility of poisoning the entire ground water basin of the Palar river, and the total poisoning of the soil in the district. The International Water Tribune in Amsterdam, at its most recent hearings last February, pronounced the case of the pollution caused by leather tannery effluents in Tamilnadu as being one among the ten most serious cases of threat to water resources in the world.

The cruel fact is that, whether it be the granite industry or the leather industry, those who make the millions are not those who are the victims, the sufferers of the poisoning of the waters and soils. The North-

South divide operates as much within the country as it operates globally. What economic liberalization is showing more clearly is that the interests of the elite, whether they be the policy-makers or those in industry, lie more with the elites of the North than with their own people in their own country. In the case of industries such as leather and granite, tied in a totally one-sided way to the world market, arguments about jobs that these industries create or the dollars they earn must bematched and measured with the jobs and livelihoods that are permanently destroyed along with the scarce and precious natural resources. The dye stuffs industry, which is another highly polluting industry, as well as the audio and video cassette industry which produces tremendous amounts of highly toxic heavy metal wastes, are slowly being shifted to countries like ours. Given our greed for foreign investments and foreign exchange, we can soon expect more of them.

his externalizing of the environmental costs that industrialized countries are practising, and which we are in a way subsidizing (because if we were to cost it then we would lose 'comparative advantage' and be 'too costly'), is also likely to make us willy nilly partners in the trade in toxic wastes, with very serious consequences for our land and water resources. It has already happened in other developing countries and is bound to also happen in our own. It is also an area in which many an unscrupulous NRI (the future 'Bofors') would be keen to make a fast buck by accepting the toxic wastes of the North for dumping in India and we have very few safeguards, or rather the loopholes are large enough to allow such fast-buck earning activity.

Andhra environmental activists are presently investigating the possibility that an NRI tried to import toxic wastes as chemical raw materials to dump at an undisclosed site in Srikakulam. Given that our export and import policies, and our customs procedure, are all obssessed with foreign exchange earnings and thus that is the only perspective from which exports and imports will be looked at, there is tremendous room

for abuse under conditions of economic liberalization. There is no reason why India's experience as a poor developing country willing to sell itself for dollars—the message that Finance Minister Manmohan Singh keeps so clearly repeating—should be any different than other countries with regard to India becoming a dumping ground for toxic wastes.

Jverall, these processes and tendencies, present already in the first wake of the 'economic liberalization' attempts, will only accelerate conflicts over access to and use of natural resources. These conflicts are already on the rise. The gruesome killings in Assam in 1983, which took on the form of a tribal versus non-tribal conflict, was perhaps the most dramatic of all that caught national attention. Such conflicts are constantly taking place in many forest areas, on the seas between traditional fishermen and trawler fishermen, between inland water fishermen and sea fishermen, between water merchants and common village folk over the depletion of ground water resources, over privatization of common property resources and over the destruction of common property resources by outin traditionally managed common property systems. The list is endless and is literally spread over the country and across different ecosystems. Economic liberalization processes only increase these conflicts. Quite often these conflicts take on a religious, linguistic or casterelated form, while deep down they are really due to problems created by the destruction of livelihoods linked to natural resource base destruction.

What is the way out? It definitely does not lie in the timid, cowardly thinking of our present economic policy-making elite. It is not possible, in this brief paper, to go into the alternatives. In any case, a major damage caused by policy-making that is carried out hidden from the public gaze and which prevents public debate of policy, is the denial of the possibility to debate and work out alternatives. Alternatives which can seriously internalize both the costs of resource exploitation, environmental damage and more importantly

the long-term future, that of the next generation and make them an active dimension of policy alternatives. This is completely ruled out in the supineness of present economic policy-making.

Referring to the situation of the Southern economies in a global sense, Harman Daly, the renowned ecological economist says, Of two opposing views on how to help the South, the traditional view is that rich Northern high-consumption societies should consume yet more in order to help the South by providing larger markets. The alternative view is that the North should stabilize its resource consumption, and reduce its damage to global life support systems. Any higher consumption must come from productivity improvements, rather than from increased throughput growth. If natural resources were infinite, then growth would unreservedly be good. Since resources are finite, then more Northern growth inevitably means less room for Southern growth. Productivity improvements must replace throughput growth as the path of progress for the North, and eventually for the South as well.'

It is a similar perspective that should fundamentally guide the way we want our economy to grow. We cannot allow the demands of a highly consumptive tiny fraction of the elite to determine the overall thrust of the economic policy and sacrifice not only our natural resources and heritage but also deny the basic needs of our vast millions who at present do not even have a decent human existence.

Whatever be the choices and alternatives that we as a society want to consider, we need policy-makers and political leaders with a vision. Otherwise we all become victims of petty technocrats and economists, like the men who run our economy now. It brings to mind what Robert Lekachman wrote in his book Economists at Bay about the role of economists in the Nixon era: 'As the prophet has said, where there is no vision the people perish. Economists who think small thoughts condemn themselves to be intellectual hirelings, instruments of other people's purposes.'

# Rural neglect

K. P. KANNAN

TO say that agriculture is the basic sector of our economy is to state the obvious. Its development therefore is critical to the process of economic development in the country. There is however cause for concern as to the impact of the new economic policy on agriculture and the related aspect of rural development. It is amazing to watch the remarkable ease and pace with which a changeover in track has been attained with regard to economic policy. In practical terms, the objective has been shifted from development to growth with an immediate emphasis on correcting the external account imbalances as dictated by the USdominated multilateral agencies, the IMF and the World Bank. Among other things, this has meant a wholesale shift to policies aimed at globalizing the economy and production for exports. In this sense the agricultural sector has, of course, received some attention.

The Government of India's Economic Survey 1991-92 states that 'agriculture is the least protected sector of the economy; its access to world markets needs to be improved, and barriers to access need to be removed, so that it can make a more substantial contribution to exports' (Part I, p. 25). The Planning Commission's recent document on 'Objectives, Thrusts and Macro Dimensions of the Eighth Plan' says that 'the strategy for agricultural

development in the Eighth Plan must aim at not only achieving self sufficiency in food but also generating surpluses of specific agricultural commodities for export' (p. 20). This stated objective will have to be examined realistically in the global context. But more importantly, what has happened in the new economic policy is a relative sidelining of agriculture and rural development, the adverse consequences of which have not yet been articulated publicly in sufficient detail. These two aspects are taken up here for discussion.

An immediate consequence of an export-oriented strategy for agriculture would be a shift in area from food crops such as rice, wheat etce-tera, to export-oriented cash crops backed up by technology and finance. This type of agrobusiness is more feasible and attractive for large entrepreneurial farmers and corporate firms, as has been proved in many Latin American, African and such Asian countries as the Philippines. Even in the Indian context, it is not an entirely new phenomenon but a resurrection of a system of large scale plantation agriculture, begun during the colonial period, as in tea, coffee and rubber plantations owned by companies. What is disturbing is that this type of agriculture is being considered when the self-sufficiency argument in foodgrain production is in the spurious sense of maintaining a buffer stock by the government and not in meeting the minimum requirements of more than 40% of the population who are below the poverty line.

That this magnitude of poverty is closely related to the inequality in land distribution and the limited employment opportunities in rural areas is now being increasingly forgotten. With the possibility of a small segment in Indian agriculture emerging as 'agroindustry', the small holders face the threat of losing whatever bits of land they possess. The market will see to it that their limited access to technology and finance and such other crucial inputs as water will render them increasingly uncompetitive and they will be left with no other option than leasing out or selling their land to large-scale farmers. On the other hand, the employment intensity in export-oriented crops is less than in food crops. This would further diminish the prospects of employment for the land-poor and the landless.

But what about the prospects for agricultural commodities in the external market? What lessons can be drawn from countries dependent on their export? The 1980s have witnessed a downswing in prices of several agricultural commodities ranging from 17% for wheat to 64% for sugar. Countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America suffered badly in this process. As more and more developing countries compete with each other in their desperate attempts at the IMF/World Bank type of structural adjustments, there is oversupply in the world market resulting in price fall.

According to one estimate, the loss suffered by sub-Saharan African countries due to the fall in commodity prices was around US \$ 50 billion during the short span of 1986 to 1988. Of course, the fall would not have been so sharp had the sellers been in a position to influence prices. Unfortunately, it is the buyers who decide the prices and they are few in number and control a substantial portion of the trade. According to UNCTAD, three to six large corporations control the bulk of international

trade in agricultural commodities, 60 to over 70% in sugar and bananas, and over 80% in wheat, coffee, cocoa, tea, pineapple, forest products, cotton and jute. Given this scenario, what would India gain by exporting agricultural commodities?

ertain immediate fall-outs of the new economic policy on agriculture can already be discerned. Faced with the alarming rise in foodgrain prices, the government was forced to import one million tonnes of wheat, large quantities of edible oil as well as cotton. But this did not succeed in arresting the upward swing in prices which has affected the rural masses much more severely than the others. The overall inflation as measured by the not-so-relevant Wholesale Price Index was more than 13%. However the inflationary pressure on the people, especially the rural poor, should be measured on the basis of their consumption pattern in which food represents a large proportion. The Economic Survey of 1991-92 admits that the rate of inflation was more than 16% for primary articles, nearly 18% for food articles and a straight 23% for foodgrains.

So far, there is no evidence to indicate that the rural poor will be spared inflationary pressure in the future. If anything, it is likely to continue. The subsidy on fertilizers was partially cut last year, although this year the Finance Minister has refrained from making any further cuts for reasons less likely to be based on developmental considerations than the fear of touching sensitive political nerves. But the partial loss to farmers, especially large farmers who have large marketable surpluses, has been amply compensated by increasing the procurement price. For example, the procurement price of common paddy was raised from Rs. 160 per quintal in 1989-90 to Rs. 230 in 1991-92, an increase of 30%. The rural poor, on the other hand, had to pay a much higher price for their consumption of foodgrains. The issue price of rice was Rs. 244 per quintal in 1989-90 and this was raised to Rs. 377 in 1991-92, an increase of more than

It is possible to argue that such a rise in foodgrain prices could be

absorbed by the rural poor if access to employment and income are commensurately enhanced. It is here that rhetoric and reality separate. The central plan outlay for rural development has declined by 11.6%. The budgeted Rs. 2046 crores in 1992-93 for the main employment generation programme—Jawahar Rozgar Yojana-represents a fall of 2.5% compared to 1991-92, which was the same as in 1990-91 at Rs. 2100 crores. The budgeted amount for IRDP 1992-93 is the same as in the previous year. But the cruel joke is that these budgeted figures were revised downwards resulting in nonfulfilment of targets. Thus in 1990-91 the expenditure for rural development was Rs. 154 crores less than the budgeted amount; in 1991-92 it was cut by as much as Rs. 500 crores! For JRY the corresponding figures were Rs. 100 and Rs. 275 crores. It must be pointed out here that these cuts are in absolute money terms. The real reductions are much larger if we take into account the rate of inflation in the economy.

A he prospects of augmenting employment generation through specially designed programmes are therefore bleak. This, we would argue, is a direct fallout of the new economic policy. But the question then is: will sufficient employment be generated through a growth process which is sought to be achieved by the structural adjustment programme? A preliminary look at some of the fundamental economic variables does not leave any room for optimism. In fact, there is the distinct possibility of an increase in the rate of unemployment as a result of the retrenchment of the existing workforce due to the structural adjustment process estimated at anywhere between four to eight million within the next three years, and a declining rate of growth in employment due to a fall in employment elasticity.

There is already widespread concern over the prospect of such large-scale retrenchment of workers as has been envisaged by the government. The sweet talk about a 'safety net' for them is at best intended to soften the political resistance and the economic hardships of those retrenched. However, what is obvious

is that there is no talk about retraining, re-employment or a well worked out plan to encourage labourmanaged forms of production organization. The rural sector is not immune to this prospect of large-scale retrenchment. Apart from the rural dependents of these workers, an acceleration of the process of informalization and ruralization cannot be ruled out with adverse consequences on wages and employment conditions in rural areas.

L here is also another side to the picture. 'Safety nets' are only meant for those employed in the organized sector; no such mechanisms exist nor are they envisaged for those rural workers who may face similar prospects. And of course, the game of 'insider' versus 'outsider' is also evident here. Those who are outside the purview of employment i.e. the unemployed, and those coming into the labour force are to fend for themselves. The new economic policy has only the magic of the market to offer them by way of employment. And it is here that some of the fundamentals look bleak indeed.

The Planning Commission has assessed that the total number of persons requiring employment during the 1990s would be around 106 million, including the existing backlog of unemployment. Assuming the rate of unemployment and addition to the labour force during the 1990s to be the same as in the 1980s, around 10 million additional jobs will have to be created every year. This means a warranted compound growth rate of over 3% in employment during the 1990s, taking the total labour force to around 300 million.

What are the macroeconomic fundamentals required to achieve this rate of employment? Employment elasticity with respect to growth in gross domestic product (GDP) has shown a declining trend; between 0.55 and 0.60% during 1972-82 to 0.38% during 1983-88. This means that during the 1970s every 1% growth in domestic income produced around 0.6% growth in employment whereas during the 1980s we needed nearly 2% growth in domestic income to produce the same (0.6%) growth rate in employment. This is

the price the economy has paid in terms of the high growth rate achieved during the 1980s.

With the liberalization of imports of capital goods, there is every prospect of a further decline in employment elasticity. Even if this rate of 0.38% is maintained, the required growth rate in GDP for the 1990s would be 8% per annum. What are the prospects of attaining such a growth rate? The first year (1991-92) of 'structural adjustment' has given us a GDP growth rate of 2.5%; by the government's own admission, this is unlikely to be any different during the second year. This means the growth rate in employment has been only around 1%—much below the required rate of 3%. One may turn around and say that this trend will be reversed and that the 'market will do it'. How realistic is this optimism?

L he employment growth rate in the economy has been declining over the years. The Planning Commission's calculations show that a 2.82% growth in employment during 1973-78 fell to 2.22% during 1978-83 and then to 1.55% during 1983-88. The sharper decline during 1983-88 has been contributed by the organized sector and agriculture. The employment growth in the organised sector declined from 2.42% during 1978-83 to 1.36% during 1983-88 and in agriculture it has been hovering around 1% per annum. It is the public sector which has contributed to the bulk of the employment growth in the organized sector: around 2.13% during 1983-88. Private sector employment growth during this period has been a paltry 0.18%. Counterpose this with the expanded role in investment and production for the private sector along with a diminished role for the public sector set in motion by the new economic policy and visualize the prospects for employment growth in the economy.

Targeted credit for agriculture and rural development will be another casualty in the new economic policy. Recent reports suggest that the government is determined to implement the recommendations of the Narasimham committee. One of the recommendations is to 'free' the

commercial banks gradually from priority sector lending, which basically means agriculture and related activities. The adverse consequences of this development would be a decline in access to credit as well as an increase in the cost of credit. This is likely to be felt more acutely by the small and medium farmers.

There is no denying the fact that the country urgently requires serious political and economic initiatives to reduce wastage and leakage of resources, enhance productivity and above all aim at a growth which is broad-based enough to reduce the glaring inequalities in wealth, income and employment. This certainly calls for fundamental structural changes notably in the institutional structures some of which, like land reforms, are not even mentioned.

But this is not enough. Institutional structures for implementation of plans and programmes also demand change and innovation. The much talked about system of decentralized planning and development is particularly crucial for agricultural and rural development in terms of mobilizing local resources (including human), ensuring local level participation and initiating a broad-based programme for strengthening the foundations of rural production. This way it should be possible to build the goal of full or near-full employment into the development strategy. No mention of these dimensions of development finds a place in the new economic policy. On the contrary, those political forces out to block the emergence of a decentralized development system are still at large. The experience of Kerala and Karnataka are only two recent examples.

The Economic Survey of 1991-92 outlines seven major areas of policy reform in the context of the new economic policy and the order in which they are listed is not, in our opinion, without significance. These are: fiscal policy, trade policy, industrial policy, financial policy, agricultural policy and then, of course, poverty alleviation policy and human resource policy. It is not enough that 'the people's basic needs are met and distress prevented' but also 'the people must be helped to enhance their own capabilities' in

terms of education, health care and uplift of women, the last of which 'is essential for moderating population growth' (p. 26). That development is the best contraceptive may have been stated by an Indian prime minister, but what has the Indian government been doing? It is not necessary to look at Sri Lanka, Cuba, Costa Rica or China for drawing proper lessons on how to moderate population growth. In India itself, Kerala has demonstrated this despite its severe economic constraints.

But the lessons of Kerala are conspicuously rejected when it comes to all-India, and the recent budget has gone one step ahead in such a rejection. How else could one explain the paltry sums provided for elementary education and health? Rs. 284 crores for elementary education in 1992-93 compared to Rs. 287 crores in 1991-92 or Rs. 302 crores for health in both the years may not seem much of a cut in absolute terms. One only has to think of inflation to realize the magnitude of the cut in real terms. But more fundamentally, the proportions earmarked for these are the true indicators of their importance. Health accounts for a mere 2.1% of government expenditure (both centre and states) in India compared to 4.1% in all developing countries and 12.3% in the industrialized countries. For education, it is 2.7% for India while a country like Zaire spends 6.1% and Mexico 12.3%. The central government's real thinking on population growth is evident when one sees that Rs. 1000 crores have been earmarked for family welfare (a euphemism for family planning) in 1992-93 compared to Rs 749 crores in 1991-92.

Viewed from a long-term as well as broader angle, one cannot but get the feeling that the imperative for broad-based development is being replaced by growth per se. If one detects a streak of social Darwinism underlying the new economic policy and a strategy of 'betting on the strong', it would be an immense task to provide evidence to the contrary. Indeed, a small segment of the Indian society will march into the 21st century. The possibility of a larger segment, especially the rural poor, sliding back to the 19th century cannot be ruled out.

# Tackling rural poverty

N. CHANDRA MOHAN

THERE appears to be serious rethinking at the highest levels of the government on the need for more affirmative action to protect the rural poor and other vulnerable segments of society from the onslaughts of economic liberalization. Hours before the Eighth Plan was to be finalized, the sectoral allocation for rural development was substantially hiked by as much as Rs 16,000 crore from an initial outlay of Rs 14,000 crore, reportedly at the behest of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

Most significantly, this was done without consulting the Finance Minister, who is spearheading the current drive for economic liberalization. More was to soon follow. At the National Development Council (NDC) meeting to approve the Eighth Plan in late May, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao forcefully presented a case for recognizing the limitations of the market as a sole vehicle of development.

According to him, the market mechanism may be able to bring about an 'equilibrium' between demand (backed by purchasing power) and supply, but planning was necessary to take care of the poor and downtrodden, who were for the most part outside the market system and

had little asset endowment to benefit from the natural growth of economic activity. This train of thought naturally suggests that 'we cannot rely on markets to fulfil the minimum needs of the people. We cannot provide education and health for all through the market. The market alone cannot ensure employment and a living wage to all our rural poor'.

This touching concern for the rural poor comes at a time when a year of structural adjustments have begun to bite; when the popular sectors of society such as the workers and peasantry have become restive and increasingly reluctant to shoulder the burdens of adjustment. Alternative constructions, however, are possible on the whys and whereafores of the PM's remarks.

At one level, they represent a spirited defence of the continuing relevance of dirigisme (including the Planning Commission) in today's changing times. At another level, they unmistakably indicate an awareness that the benefits of economic liberalization do not automatically 'trickle down' to the rural poor and needy. Hence the increased allocations for rural development and the need for affirmative action to reduce

poverty in India. The PM's statements do not necessarily mean that economic liberalization is on the backburner. Far from it. But they most certainly suggest a retreat from the facile notion that faster economic growth by itself can take care of the poverty question.

The call for direct interventionist policies to provide a safety net for the rural poor in fact follows a year of costly dithering on this vital question. Adjustment with a human face was mooted way back in the budget of 1991-92 but remained nothing but a fiscal fiddle. Although the poor were to be protected by enhanced outlays in the social sectors and schemes of employment generation, the allocations mindlessly rehashed those in the interim budget of 1991-92!

Matters did not dramatically improve in the budget for 1992-93, which sought to flesh out the concept of a national renewal fund (NRF). The superficial approach of the government to adjustment with a human face is indicated by the absence of any study whatsoever on the number of poor and unemployed likely to require a safety net. The possibility that the NRF is vastly underfunded to take care of the burdens of structural adjustment is strong indeed.

The PM's intervention was obviously intended to arrest the drift on implementing adjustment with a human face. With this, the pendulum appears to have swung away from 'trickle down' approaches to rural poverty. This is welcome as such approaches in any case were hardly relevant in the Indian context. The trends and fluctuations in rural poverty since the post-Independence years clearly suggest that affirmative actions and government policy had a greater impact on poverty than any 'trickle down' approach.

For a sense of perspective, the absolute numbers of poor in the country according to estimates prepared by well known economists such as Professor B.S. Minhas, L.R. Jain and S.D. Tendulkar, amounted to 361.2 million in 1987-88. This is exactly equal to the entire popula-

tion of the country in 1951! A substantial proportion of them reside in the rural areas and their numbers increased during the 1970s and 1980s. The rural population in poverty, defined as those who cannot afford a subsistence standard of Rs. 49 per capita at 1973-74 prices, increased from 257.9 million in 1970-71 to 283.7 million in 1987-88.

By region, the number of rural poor are disproportionately represented in the eastern (Assam, West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa) and central regions (Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan). Roughly three-fifths of the rural poor of India belonged to these two regions in 1970-71. Their combined share had risen further to two-thirds of the total in 1987-88.

Not surprisingly, incidences of mortality and morbidity are the highest in the eastern and central regions. Malnutrition is endemic. Illiteracy is high particularly among females and virtually every other indicator of the physical quality of life and socio-economic development shows a dramatic deterioration in the states of central India, popularly referred to as the cowbelt.

While the absolute numbers of the rural poor has grown, the fact nevertheless remains that their incidence or share in India's population has registered a decline from 58.8% in 1970-71 to 50.8% in 1983 and further to 48.7% in 1987-88. While this is truly creditable, it must also be noted that the annualized rate of decline in rural poverty was much higher in the 1970s than the roaring 1980sl

The limited relevance of 'trickle down' should be obvious from the slower pace of poverty reduction in the 1980s, a time when the economy as a whole experienced a trend acceleration in its growth rate to 5.6% per annum. If faster growth was enough, the poverty magnitudes ought to have declined much faster than in the 1970s. This simply did not happen even in the agriculturally prosperous states of the country. In fact, between 1983 and 1987-88, the incidence of rural poverty rose rather than declined in Punjab, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Orissa,

Assam and Jammu and Kashmir. Punjab is a clear surprise as the state's incidence of rural poverty rose from 18.45% in 1983 to 21.02% in 1987-88.

Nevertheless, the overall picture is one of a steady fall in the rural poverty magnitudes in the country as a whole. It is generally accepted by a wide range of economists, including A K Ghose of the ILO, that the incidence of rural poverty was headed downwards because of radical land reforms (as during the early 1950s) and more importantly on account of programmes directly designed to impact on rural poverty such as the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), National Programme Rural Employment (NREP) during the 1970s and 1980s.

The alleviation of rural poverty in the Indian context, therefore, does not require faster growth per se, but direct redistribution of assets and incomes. This is a point of view that has unfortunately vanished from the public debate on this question. The foundations for the most successful assault on rural poverty in Kerala were truly laid by the most progressive land reforms ever carried out in the country. Yet the very mention of radical redistribution has become passe!

As for the various anti-poverty schemes, it is somewhat difficult not to be rather cynical about their efficacy. Instances of widespread leakages, corruption and graft have been repeatedly documented. Nevertheless, the fact remains that they did make a difference to rural poverty during the late 1970s and 1980s. Even during 1987-88, the year of the so-called severest drought of this century, the scale of such schemes dramatically impacted on poverty like never before.

During that year, outlays on IRDP schemes amounted to Rs. 7.3 billion, while those on NREP and other employment generation schemes totalled a staggering Rs. 17 billion. The Minimum Needs Programme, which makes public services available to the rural poor such as health care, schemes for eradication of adult illiteracy and so on, accounted for another Rs 28 billion. All in all,

such poverty alleviation measures aggregated to a whopping 2 to 3% of GDP in 1987-881

Such a massive scale of direct intervention obviously served to arrest the dramatic decline in consumption of the rural poor when drought and other natural catastrophes periodically devastate the economy. Not surprisingly, the rural poverty magnitudes began to decline from the late 1970s to the 1980s precisely when these programmes were implemented in a big way. If this reasoning is valid, it only underscores the magnitude of the challenge ahead of the Rao administration in its efforts to make a dent on the poverty question. As the country enters the second year of structural adjustment, the government has indeed to pay a heavy price to protect the poor and vulnerable segments of society broadly on the scale of 1987-88 drought expenditures.

The task is complicated, not least because of the deepening fiscal crisis of the state which simply renders such expenditures difficult to finance. Profound systemic transformations are also currently underway in India's agricultural sector, which make it difficult to alleviate poverty on the scale of the 1970s and 1980s. At one level, although real wages of agricultural labour have risen in virtually all the states of the country over this period, employment elasticities are dramatically shrinking in agriculture.

The Ministry of Agriculture's cost of cultivation data has been intensively analyzed by economists such as Shiela Bhalla and the late D.S. Tyagi. For the period, 1971-72 to 1983-84, the average elasticity of employment worked out to 0.59. Between 1968-69 to 1978-89, another study estimated this elasticity at 0.77. This means that if there is a 100% rise in agricultural value added, the incremental employment is only 77. The demand for agricultural labour is therefore clearly declining over time.

This development bids fair to further discredit 'trickle down' strategies insofar as output growth in India's agriculture will be increasingly accompanied by slow or

declining labour absorption in agriculture. The unpublished report of the study group on employment generation for the national commission on rural labour indicates that the employment position is really comfortable only in two states, Andhra Pradesh and Haryana. In the rest, even handsome rates of growth in non-agricultural employment will not be sufficient to offset poor labour absorption in the agricultural sector.

Thus during the coming decades, the prospect is for a zero growth in the farm workforce. Disturbingly, in at least three states, Punjab, Gujarat and Orissa, the absolute number of workers engaged in agriculture already declined during the 1970s and early 1980s. The movement away from agriculture is thus already underway, a fact attested to by the 1991 census as well.

These factors immensely complicate a war on rural poverty in the 1990s and beyond. The current lack of manoeuvre in India's public finances makes matters worse. Capital spending is currently being slashed across the board to reduce the fiscal deficit, which simply erodes the ability of the government to pump in a substantial amount of resources into improving rural infrastructure, irrigation and flood control and employment generation schemes.

Despite all this, the PM's decision to back a substantial step up in the allocations for rural development is a welcome development. This is a necessary and vital first step to reduce and eventually eliminate rural poverty in India by the turn of the century. However, there is a lurking danger that these outlays might simply be frittered away or degenerate into populism. Merely throwing a lot of money at the rural poverty question does not make it go away.

It is therefore essential that the government carefully formulate and execute schemes of rural development in line with the poverty profile of the country. For starters, it must move away from the superficiality of the current approach which smugly talks of the centre evolving a basket of schemes of rural development totalling Rs. 30,000

crore from which the various states can choose during the Eighth Plan.

Preliminary indications are that the increased availability of funds will translate only into a massive employment generation and drinking water supply programme. Schemes such as the much vaunted Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) to the exclusion of other anti-poverty programmes, however, will only be partially successful in alleviating rural poverty.

The latest quick evaluation of JRY in fact showed that this scheme could create employment for only 25 to 35 days for each beneficiary as against the target of 100 days of employment. Althouge the JRY had created assets, it had no provisions for their maintenance. According to the World Bank's report on poverty, employment and social services in India, the previous NREP and other employment generation schemes also looked impressive in terms of overall targets but from the point of view of each beneficiary they typically had only a modest short run impact on nonagricultural employment. For instance, the average daily employment was 1.67 million during 1985-86 to 1986-87, which amounted to only a piffling 0.6% of average daily rural employmentl

The moral of the story is not to scrap JRY and other schemes of its ilk, but that blindly relying on them alone might not be much of a solution to the regionally and occupationally differentiated incidence of rural poverty in India. It is important to bear in mind that the heart of the poverty problem in eastern and central India is not the shortfall in the days of employment as such but rather the low productivity of the days of work that the rural poor actually engage in.

Anti-poverty and rural development schemes therefore must differentiate between two distinct categories of employment problems in the country. The predominant problem in the eastern and central regions of India is essentially one of low agricultural productivity while in the rest of the country proverty is a more transitory phenomenon associated with monsoon failures.

The poverty problem in the rest of the country is associated with sharp year-to-year seasonal swings in employment as the cultivation of coarse cereals, pulses, oilseeds and unirrigated cash crops depends on the vagaries of the monsoons. This applies to regions as diverse as Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka. Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu. In the opinion of economists like Bhalla and N.J. Kurian, stabilizing employment opportunities in these regions could take the form of a generalized veraion of the Employment Guarantee Scheme (BGS) as in Maharashtra.

But the eastern and southern belt of the country is a different ballgame altogether as the crux of the problem is the preponderance of marginal land holdings and backward semifeudal agriculture. These are also the regions in which the development and the utilization of irrigation potential is relatively the lowest. For instance, against a high of 96% in Punjab, the percentage of irrigation potential utilized is a low of 28% in Madhya Pradesh and 29% in Bihar, 33% in West Bengal and Orissa. Little wonder that the forms of rural poverty assume a rather acute form in eastern and central. India.

According to the report of the National Commission of Rural Labour referred to earlier, the seri- ousness of low productivity in these regions is simply far greater than any kind of unemployment. So instead of JRY and BGS type of schemes. what is more relevant to these regions are comprehensive programmes for continuous and substantial upgradation of rural infrastructure in these regions. These would mean having concrete schemes for irrigation and flood control, including animal husbandry. These, in turn, imply schemes for making non-farm enterprises viable with a view to accelerate the process of siphoning off surplus rural workers from the land. In other words, this amounts to an ambitious agenda of hastening the movement away from the countryside while simultaneously placing agriculture on a sounder technological footing in the east and central regions of India.

Infrastructure upgradation in these regions also means schools, better health care, roads, electricity and transportation facilities. The case for such schemes appears compelling because the quality of infrastructure in agriculture explains inter-regional variations in rural poverty in India. Moreover, anti-poverty programmes have succeeded better in those regions of the country which have a relatively better infrastructure than those which do not.

While the new sort of thinking on rural development is progressive, there are a number of difficulties that have to be sorted out before they come to fruition. The division of social sector and anti-poverty expenditures as between the centre and the states is thorny indeed, as evidenced during the recent NDC meeting. Some states in fact wanted the JRY and other similar schemes to be completely transferred to the states.

Despite these difficulties, the rural development schemes for infrastructural upgradation have to be followed through if the rural poverty problem is to be alleviated by the turn of the century. The stakes are high because any let up in the pace of infrastructural upgradation will only reverse or arrest whatever development has occurred in India's agriculture. The prospect then is for a widening of inter-regional disparities in rural development and poverty over time, as states such as Punjab and Haryana which have better infrastructure will continue to lead the way. The states of the eastern and central regions of India will only experience a retardation in growth impulses if investments are not made in rural development.

The stakes are doubly high for India as this is the only route that it can take to avoid turning into a basket Latin American or African country, who lost a decade of development implementing IMF-sponsored stabilization programmes. During the 1980s, the alarming reversals in the health, nutrition and educational standards that occurred among the most vulnerable segments of their populations, notably children and the rural poor, was too heavy a price to pay for remaining current on debt servicing obligations. India can do without that denouement.

# Comment

THE substance of new economic policies has attracted much debate but there has been little comment on the government's policy style. The way policy is made is not a trivial matter. The present secretive, top-down style of the government of India has become an obstacle. One essential for mobilizing the nation for further reforms is to make the policy process much more participatory and transparent than it is today.

The most prominent characteristic of the current round of economic reforms is that very few people are involved at the stage of policy design. The reform impulse is largely confined to three central ministries (Finance, Commerce and Industry) and there is little involvement of other agencies in Delhi or indeed in state capitals. Within the reform-minded central ministerial trio, policy work is done, by and large, by not much more than perhaps two or three dozen very senior civil servants and ministers. The very narrow policy circle has two implications.

First, it means that very few people have a sense of ownership of the programme and all others feel excluded from the very important deliberations leading up to decisions. No wonder the commitment of the government to the adopted policy package rests much more on bureaucratic and party discipline than on any sense of personal participation in designing what is to be done. Not surprisingly, many tend to regard the new policies as an 'imposition' rather than a programme based on attractive new ideas which have been thoroughly discussed and whose implications are well understood. Since responsibility for the new policies is not widely shared, implementation can become much more of a problem than it would under participatory policy-making.

Secondly, the narrow policy circle, the secretiveness and the top-down channels of communication make it very difficult to utilize effectively the professional and technical resources available for policy work. Senior civil servants, many of whom are very competent professionals, work feverishly and tirelessly but there are clear limits to what they can do in a given period of time. Meanwhile, junior and middle level officials get few opportunities for doing creative work. Many are not well-trained but those who are tend to languish on the vine.

Furthermore, ministry officials have not been able to use fully the rapidly growing resources of

skilled personnel that are outside government in think-tanks, universities and consulting firms. Some are called to serve on expert committees appointed by the government but the record of their contributions is a mixed one. Quite frequently, their terms of reference, membership and resources are unsatisfactory in relation to the task in hand. Not enough thought has gone into establishing these committees, in providing sufficient support to them and in following up their reports.

The policy process suffers from a scarcity of analytical inputs, thereby detracting from the speed of decisions and their quality. For example, we have not succeeded so far in drawing up policy packages for agriculture, human resource development and a number of other critical fields. Also, the actual reduction of public expenditures tended to be ad hoc and across the board rather than focused on items which analytical studies had identified to be relatively low priority. These lapses are very costly.

The formulation of policy requires both technical and professional inputs as well as political guidance. The quality of the interaction between civil servants and politicians, therefore, is crucial. Good interaction requires mutual respect, open minds and clear objectives. Too often in the Indian context, such requirements have not been fulfilled and bureaucrats have told their political bosses what they thought their bosses wanted to hear. Also, civil servants have been reluctant to be bearers of 'bad news'. The demand for a committed bureaucracy, which Indira Gandhi first raised, has tended to reduce professionalism and encourage 'chamchagiri'. For all these reasons, policy is often made without a careful and dispassionate analysis of relevant information.

It is one thing to work out the technical design of a policy package on the admittedly unrealistic premise that there are no political obstacles along the way. It is quite another thing to take account of the political dimension and revise the package accordingly. The tendency in most countries, including India, is to short-circuit the process of policy formulation and go directly to the second step, without any clear assessment of political aspects. Of course, judgements are made regarding the feasibility of various courses of action but there is no systematic analysis of the political dimension i.e., identification of supporting and opposing groups, their relative numerical and political

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Bharati Bhawan, Rishi Bazar, Thakurbari Road, Patna 800003 strengths, the nature of the bargaining process that would be involved in negotiating with opposing groups who have the capacity to undermine the proposed policy package and measures that can augment the strength of supporting groups.

It is not enough to reform economic policies, important as that is. The policy process itself should be improved. Obviously, this cannot be done in the face of a crisis but it should not be ignored now that the economic emergency is over. Government must make policy-making much more participative and much more open than it is today.

In the first instance, attention should be focused on raising the capacity for policy-making in such key central ministries as Agriculture, Labour and Information and Broadcasting as well as core economic ministries at the state level. They have a vital role to play in the reforms. Measures should be taken to improve the quality and expand the volume of mid-career training facilities so that the pool of policy analysts can be expanded greatly. In addition, there is need for the re-orientation of top civil servants in Delhi and in the state capitals. Many of them are still carrying the ideological and intellectual baggage from an earlier era which now requires a thorough re-examination in the light of India's actual experience.

Next, a new government approach aimed at increasing the participation of think-tanks, universities, consulting firms and expert committees etcetera in policy work should be defined.

Ministerial personnel should become managers of policy work in addition to being doers. They should contract out a considerable part of such work to groups outside the government. A new division of labour needs to be defined.

A programme aimed at improving the interaction between political bosses and civil servants should be worked out. It can consist of sensitization sessions, articulation of mutual expectations on the part of both sides and practical exercises. Together, politicians and officials can anticipate likely political difficulties of the technical policy package and consider ways of modifying the scope, speed or timing of the proposed measures to make them politically palatable. Such craftsmanship is an essential aspect of carrying out far-reaching economic reforms.

Far-reaching economic reforms cannot be carried out by a small group in the middle of the night, as it were. Ours is an open society with a democratic constitution, many states, numerous political parties and many pressure groups. Reforms require the mobilization of all available talent inside and outside government, a well-informed debate within official circles and in the public arena and a measure of transparency in decision-making. We need a new policy style.

#### Ravi Gulhati

# Books

#### COPING WITH SEASONALITY AND DROUGHT

by Martha Alter Chen. Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1991.

MAATISAR village (not its real name) in Dholka taluka of Ahmedabad district, Gujarat state, is a drought prone village which has experienced 'moderate' rates of growth since Independence. This has not eliminated the vulnerability of rural households to seasonal changes in weather, and the vulnerability to market fluctuations has increased. The author explores the implications of such susceptibilities using both qualitative and quantitative methods, through intensive investigations into 31 subsample households, supplemented by other focused surveys, including an agro-economic survey, a time-allocation survey, a household consumption survey, and a fuel, fodder and water consumption survey. The study is well designed, meticulously researched, conceptually articulate and easy to read.

Maatisar is a mixed caste village although out of a total of 285 households only six are from higher castes. Primary occupations include cultivation, livestock, labour, weaving, trade, etcetera. As in other Indian villages most households have a number of secondary occupations in which they engage during the slack seasons of the primary occupation. Traditionally, caste determined occupation. However even though few households have left their hereditary caste occupation, many now have another primary occupation and the number of secondary occupations has greatly diversified and increased. Both farming and non-farming occupations are marked by seasonal fluctuations, and 'each season presents predictable peaks and troughs for each occupation and households adjust accordingly'.

Chen has tracked the normal course of each of these occupations, showing the slack periods of each. Responses to seasonality and drought have also been categorized into the less and more easily reversible, so that it is possible to identify the extent of strain through the actions of people. The analysis of household livelihood systems at the micro level shows the range of strategies adopted by people in coping with seasonal fluctuations, and the fact that such coping strategies are in use all the time, since even a good year will have lean seasons.

Over time the social security provided by relatives and kinship ties has diminished. Chen finds that 'patrons, more often than poor people, give up patronage ties'. This has contributed to the loss of routine entitlements for landless labourers and landpoor farm households. However while there is a pattern of response that households have evolved to deal with both seasonality and drought (and this kind of study is able to analyze and categorize these responses, and show their rationality), the response by policy-makers is generally limited to short-term relief in drought situations.

There is ample evidence that even as they stand and with all their limitations, present strategies of public action against famine and drought are more effective than generally supposed. (As evident from Sen and Dreze's work, cited by the author, for example). But Chen's argument that drought management strategies need to be merged with ongoing development strategies is well taken. (Writing today, after the earthquake damage in Uttarakhand, this point can be made more general; 'disaster management' is necessary, but sustained attempts to deal with underlying problems need strengthening.) The reader is left to grapple with the mechanics of doing this and the emerging development debates, particularly concerning the relative roles of private and public activity, with their implications for appropriate government actions.

Researching into the lives of poor people is necessarily problematic. The end product as reproduced in this book meets high academic standards and indeed it retains the qualities of a good Ph.D. dissertation. But to the general reader the question that is of greater interest is whether this has been a 'useful'

piece of work. In her foreword to the book, Ela Bhatt says that Chen's observations 'have led to a sea-change in SEWA's understanding.' This is validation indeed. Unfortunately neither the foreword nor the book explains the nature of this change.

True, the book is not intended to be a study of SEWA. But (as the author acknowledges) (without the experience and support of the SEWA organization, the village would not have been identified, nor studied. SEWA entered Maatisar in the late 1970s, and has established co-operatives for women for dairy and weaving, a creche, schemes in cotton spinning, bamboo crafts etcetera. There are numerous references to the SEWA wells and handpumps, and other activities, but the reader's curiosity regarding the use of the research is left unsatisfied. This is unfortunate since much, though not all, of the legitimacy of this work is due to SEWA's support.

Judging by the agencies that have supported this study and the goodwill the author has among the development practitioners in this part of the world, the book will have a wide readership. It is natural to look for some cues from this work concerning the kind of actions that could control the adverse impact of seasonality and drought. Many of the findings of this book are echoed in other micro-studies; these include the significance of common property resources in generating equity, of traditional support systems in coping with the slack seasons of every year, the negative impact of market forces etcetera. Chen's study suggests that 'an integrated and long-term approach to seasonality and drought should be developed to replace the current short-term crisis management approach.' Implicit in the study is the idea that closer study and understanding of existing patterns of affected people is needed for more sensitive policy formulation. If this attempt to bridge the 'micromacro gap' is interpreted to mean that greater attention should be paid to the needs and perspectives of the local economy, it deserves strong support.

Ratna M. Sudarahan

SOCIAL ACTION AND THE LABOURING POOR: An Experience by Primila Lewis. Vistaar Publications, Delhi, 1991.

FOR those of us who grew up in the seventies, seeking avenues of honest political activism was a traumatic experience. From the collapse of the first Naxalite uprising to the Emergency, journeying through the Nav Nirman movement in Gujarat, the JP-led Total Revolution and the railway strike of 1974—a whole generation grew up with a deep distrust and cynicism about the macro political and developmental processes. The government and its developmental programmes and the political parties and their sectarian mobilization were viewed as cynical manipulation designed to keep the masses fragmented and involved with peripheral issues.

What sparked an interest was the hundreds of voluntary social action efforts, wherein middle-class youth went into the field—slums, factory sites, villages and tribal areas—to initiate politico-developmental processes amongst the masses. Somewhat grandiosely entitled 'non-party political process' by romantic theorists, this churning at the grass-roots seemed to be our contribution to the making of an India different from what it was.

By the end of the tumultous eighties, the scene changed dramatically. Voluntary, non-party social action acquired a firm and recognized niche in the developmental and political world. The cast of characters dominating this firmament changed, as did the language and cultural style of action. Though the problems that sparked off such activity—poverty, injustice, violence, inequity—remain, in fact may have deepened, the 'visible' face of social activism today is dominated by techno-managerial rather than 'politics as culture' concerns. Possibly a reflection of the materialist/consumerist tendency that currently hegemonizes the world.

The book under consideration traces this story of the post-Emergency transformation through the prism of the praxis of an individual and a group, playing out 'swadharma' of the politically inclined activist. The author's first book, Reason Wounded, told us of her initial involvement with Purbia migrant farm labour in Mehrauli and her months in jail during the Emergency. A personal narrative, somewhat in the genre of Mary Tyler's My Years in an Indian Prison, Reason Wounded had struck a deeply sympathetic chord in the minds of many other similarly inclined activists.

Social Action and the Labouring Poor, a sequel to the earlier book, traces the experiences of Primila Lewis and the Mehrauli group, with a different strata of migrant farm labour, harijan landless peasants and semi-bonded quarry workers on the outskirts of Delhi from 1978 to 1988. Unlike the earlier effort, wherein the author's positions had to be gleaned out from within the text, this book makes explicit the ideological presuppositions of the activity. The Mehrauli experiment was a self-conscious effort by activists of a Marxist/Maoist persuasion to effect social transformation in the countryside as part of the larger revolutionary impulse.

What the book traces is a complex narrative, not just of the work in distinct locations with different strata through different intervention agencies—a union, a service cooperative and a voluntary development agency—but of the theoretical/ideological debates accompanying each shift in the process. What we thus have is much more than a detailed case study of an intervention effort in a specific locale. It is the unique opportunity of associating with the process of evolution, with all its twists and turns and the accompanying agony, of a group and its thinking.

The privilege of following through the processof how the Delhi Dehat Mazdoor Union grew in

strength to acquire an autonomous and stable status; the struggle for land by the Mandi Harijans, their forming a cooperative, and then finally selling off the land to the urban builders; or the building of the quarry workers cooperative, its growth and subsequent collapse—is a rare one.

But even more rare is the insight gained about the mind of the activist and the process of articulation of activism. It is the tracing of the long, arduous and contradictory journey from a firmly held belief in a Maoist revolution to a position best described as 'tentative and unsure pragmatics'; the constant emphasis on testing out every position on the 'kasauti' of hard reality; the placing of high premium on the notion of revisability—that is likely to resonate with all those committed to honest activism.

To put it mildly, working out such a complex design is not easy. Nevertheless, the narrative holds, the descriptions and charaterizations are sharp, the debates on the making and unmaking of practice clear. The implications of choices made in a heavily constrained environment are etched out with a rare lucidity and honesty. Through the narrative we are taken through a story of courage and commitment, essential humanity, any number of valuable nuggets of sociological observation, with a candour that is as disarming as it is exceptional. This when personal narratives almost invariably smack of either a sneaky eulogy or use the opportunity to make personal swipes at others.

At a somewhat 'removed' level, the reader is unsure whether the book represents an autobiography, a chunk of the author's life, the story of a group in process, or a generalizable experience. It is when the author departs from the narrative to comment on the presuppositions and the relative failure of the 'left', the role of the surplus producing peasantry—the kulak,—the inherent limitations of feminism, the somewhat judgemental observations on the NGO scene or even the Rajiv Gandhi regime, what to speak of the root cause of the Punjab problem or the 'now forgotten' Khanjawala agitation, that there is a certain unease.

While each of these has a strong bearing on the 'how and why' of choices contemplated and exercised, these themes are in themselves too significant to be adequately handled in the space available. Caricaturing seriously held positions by others equally honestly committed to actualizing their visions cannot be a worthwhile response. In fact, at times they divert attention from the more central concern of the predilictions of the self-conscious activist.

What at least this reviewer, having been a participant in a few such experiences and debates, finds thought provoking is not the strategic impulse of 'the Mehrauli document', but the process involved in evolving a perspective that incorporates the notion of revisability. To be able to acquire a maturity and a self-confidence that can embrace the pain and the

trauma of reconsidering, possibly giving up the security of firmly believed positions to understand that the 'failure' of self or the group cannot be read as an intrinsic of an activity. And even more, to be able to accept with humility that the situation in one's chosen area and mode of intervention may have changed more as a result of processes outside one's volition and approval—it is this that marks the true internalization of an experience.

While the Mehrauli experiment, its successes and failures, may not be strictly generalizable to the many other similar efforts in different locales, both the experience and the book capture the spirit of such enterprises. Combined with its honesty and lucidity, this makes the contribution by Primila Lewis a 'must to be read', not just by development practitioners and activists, but by all concerned individuals. May be some of what motivates this narrative will also rub off on the reader.

Harsh Sethi

## Poor Rural Women by Usha Jumani. Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1991.

AFTER the virtual dismantling of socialism, the world today is euphoric about the virtues of capitalist globalist development as the only road to salvation for every country. And, without the alternative support of socialist countries, governments of developing countries have willy-nilly to follow the path of development propounded as desirable by the developed capitalist countries. This path of development is normally understood to negate self-sufficiency and small-scale non-ancillary industrialization.

A corollary to this path is that only those industries or occupations are to be encouraged in which the country has a comparative competitive advantage. Socio-economic policy should be guided not by considerations of justice and upliftment of the oppressed but by international cooperation based on international competitiveness.

Anyone viewing societal development in terms of the above perspective is likely to consider writings of the genre to which this book belongs with amusement, even hostility if one thinks it might engender serious opposition. Yet to ignore what the author advocates is to imperil development itself: the oppressed, if pushed to the wall, may well retaliate against all development. One would, therefore, recommend that this book be taken seriously by the powers that be and all those concerned with the country.

Labouring women in the self-employed and informal systems of work are an important segment of the labour force. Studies on the place of 'self-employment' in the Indian economy are receiving increasing attention from academicians and planners, and in this context *Dealing with Poverty* is a power-

ful recommendation for self-employment as a development alternative. It provides a sharp focus on it as 'a philosophy of work that has a lot to offer where self-employment for the majority of people and people's participation go hand in hand to create autonomy for every group of people, to create horizontal power relationships between people'.

The author provides an original conceptual framework to explain the social and economic dynamics of self-employment specifically in relation to poor women. In this framework, she maintains that the structure of the economies of the developing countries has to be understood in the context of informal systems of work and self-employment for the majority of the population. This is crucial as informal systems of work prevalent in India and other developing countries have been traditionally structured around generating self-employment for the majority of people.

An understanding of the reality of poor women is the starting point for translating the conceptual framework into action. Therefore, the book seeks to understand the conditions of existence of poor rural women through a participatory research study of 15 major economic activities undertaken by self-employed women in the rural areas of Ahemedabad district in Gujarat. The fieldwork was done in 1984-85. The numerical data concerning the economies of different occupations described in the book refer to that time period. The decision to base the study on the various trade groups of rural women was taken from the 12-year long experience of SEWA with these groups.

The participatory approach adopted in the study is in conformity with the belief that any sustained impact on the lives of people is possible only with the involvement of people themselves in the process. It is a step towards drawing them as 'genuine partners' in the process of development, for re-ordering hierarchical structures, power relationships and use of resources.

The book is divided into two parts. Part one has a detailed discussion of the various issues concerning rural self-employed women. The perspective on selfemployment sets the conceptual framework for the study. The chapter on 'The Common Infrastructural Issues' describes the experiences of poor self-employed women in the villages in the context of facilities (such as water, fuel wood, sanitation, electricity, maternal care, education, training and so on available to them, and issues which are part of their reality. This book does not view infrastructural facilities as part of the development of an area. It provides the poor women's perspective on these facilities, their impact on the women's lives and their priorities which are critical while planning developmental interventions. The next chapter on common social issues emphasizes that poor women by and large belong to the lower castes or untouchables.

It is against this background of infrastructural and social issues that the work issues of the 15 selec-

ted activities of the poor rural self-employed women have been described. Each activity is treated separately as a trade group. All aspects of the women's work in these trades, the micro economics of the trade, the trade specific problems and issues of the women have been given in detail. The trade groups (namely agricultural labour, digging mud, construction work, brick making, reed work, bamboo work, leather, pottery, weaving, vegetable growing, poultry, milk products, dairying, sewing, grocery stall keeping) are discussed at length to highlight their influence on the lives of poor women. Of these, the 10 home-based activities highlight the significance of home-based work for poor women. It is a way in which they can combine their various roles (socioeconomic) with relative case.

Through the analysis of trade groups certain common economic issues emerged, which were seen to dominate the lives of poor self-employed women. Low income, inherent uncertainty about the income they earn, work opportunities restricted to caste occupations or labour intensive unskilled work, landlessness, lack of assets, problems of credit and loan, the handicaps faced due to a shift from 'verbal' to 'written' transactions for access to bank facilities, procurement of raw material, inability to monitor market changes or to cope with the commercial or market economy, and lack of control over their earnings are some of the problems highlighted in the analysis.

The author argues in favour of the traditional system which encourages self-employment for most people in the rural and urban areas. The development programmes are however shifting the trend from self-employment to other modes of employment. As these programmes do not regard people's aspirations which are centred on self-employment, they are unsuccessful

It is on the basis of the understanding of their conditions of existence that Usha Jumani evolves strategies for interventionist action which can strengthen the position of these women in the economy. Interventions suggested through the planning process are enumerated in the last chapter of the first section. The author suggests that to tackle poverty, the main thrust should be centred around the economic activities which enhance the income of the women and the families concerned: they should provide a lasting source of income and be complemented by a whole set of support services. Training' and 'organizing' women is imperative in this process of assisting them to tap their potential. While other employed workers can influence employer-employee relationships through their organizations, the state and the public policy are the main forces which determine the fate of the self-employed in any economy. Therefore, the author recommends a series of trade specific demands for home-based workers.

The author further supports her analysis by presenting 30 case studies of women engaged in these occupations to illustrate the realities in each trade

group. These personalized narrations which comprise the second part of the book, bring alive their situation, perceptions and perspectives. The annexure 'Characteristics of Ahmedabad' provides the setting for the overall economy of this region and includes extensive information in the light of which the issues faced by these poor women have to be understood.

Usha Jumani's own experience, both at the grass root level and managerial level has provided her with deep insight and understanding as well as the objectivity required for a thorough analysis. Having been part of the voluntary sector herself, the author believes that any hope for bringing about real change is increasingly focused on non-governmental voluntary efforts.

Sudha Acharya

# PRODUCTIVITY AND GROWTH IN INDIAN MANUFACTURING by Isher Judge Ahluwalia. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1991.

INDIAN planning in the fifties was largely built around the influence of the Harrod-Domar model that related the rate of growth to the ratio of the savings rate and the capital output ratio. But the emphasis in the past was restricted always to improving the savings rate in developing economies. Sukhumoy Chakravarty elaborated the same concerns: 'how an economy which saves five per cent of its income is transformed into one that saves 20% of its income over time'—an idea that has been the theme of most development economists: Nurkse, Rosestein Rodan-Scitovsky. From the second half of the fifties, planning was influenced by the Mahalanobis model that emphasized investments in heavy industry as the pathway to development. Higher investments in the capital goods industry would result in higher output growth of the economy. But that, as we know, did not happen in India, primarily because of the lack of productivity improvements—the primary concern of the present work.

Isher Judge Ahluwalia's new book extends her earlier pioneering work on the country's industrial growth in the first three decades of planning to the crucial decade of the eighties. The sixties and the seventies 'were a period of drift' for the Indian economy that saw investments declining, causing a slowdown in growth. The decade of the eighties for the first time lifted India's economic performance beyond the 3.5% growth rates that the economy continuously registered in the past. And it is this phenomenon that needs an explanation if India's current move to reform the economy is to succeed. Clearly, merely an expansion of aggregate investment is insufficient for the economy to improve its rate of growth, especially in the midst of a severe resource constraint. Whichever aspect of industrial performance we look at, be it industrial growth or performance of the public sector or export performance, the underlying factors seem to be linked to productivity performance.'

The work itself, since it coincides with the reform programme of the Narasimha Rao government and traces the impact of policy on industrial performance over three and a half decades, is crucial for everybody who is attempting to understand present reality. An enormous volume of data covering 63 industries has been carefully sifted through to arrive at figures for total factor productivity growth, that is the analytical basis for her investigations.

The results itself are revealing. Textiles, which remain the largest industry in the manufacturing sector, experience virtually no growth in total factor productivity and in employment over two and a half decades. For iron and steel, the hallmark of the country's heavy industries strategy, the experience with respect to the total factor productivity growth has been even worse. Only 27 of the 63 industry groups analyzed have positive total factor productivity growth statistics, with the average for the 63 industries working out to 0.4. Industries with the fastest total factor productivity growth (TFPG) are electricity generation equipment, watches and clocks, jewellery and related articles. Other industries with high TFPG are fertilizers, railway equipment and pharmaceuticals.

There is an entire chapter devoted to the explanation of inter industry differences in productivity growth and the impact of policy. Ahluwalia's results indicate a positive effect of faster growth on capital intensity and productivity growth. Besides, econometric testing also indicates that the higher the degree of import substitution in an industry, the lower is its productivity growth.

In the domestic regulatory framework, there is a positive link between the scale of operations and productivity growth and a tendency towards fragmentation of firms because of distortions of the domestic policy. But most of the improvement in TFP during the early eighties can be traced to improvement in labour productivity with capital productivity neither improving nor declining. The consumer goods sector has been the leader in the turnaround in productivity growth after 1980. In the earlier decade its performance was either negative or negligible. The other significant improvement in productivity has been in the capital goods sector with TFP improving from 1.7% to 3.4% per annum.

The study's merit lies in its continuous shift from empirical findings to the policy environment with an entire chapter devoted to international comparisons in improvements in productivity. And the policy framework that it suggests to improve productivity conforms entirely with what has been executed over the last year—an opening up to the world economy, a move away from discretionary physical controls to investments, removing barriers to exit, modernizing of labour legislation, careful restructuring to minimize socio-economic costs and public sector reform. This work will certainly go a long way in reinforcing the case of economic reform.

Seminarist

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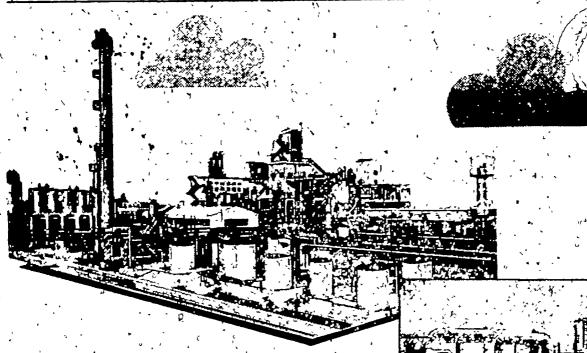
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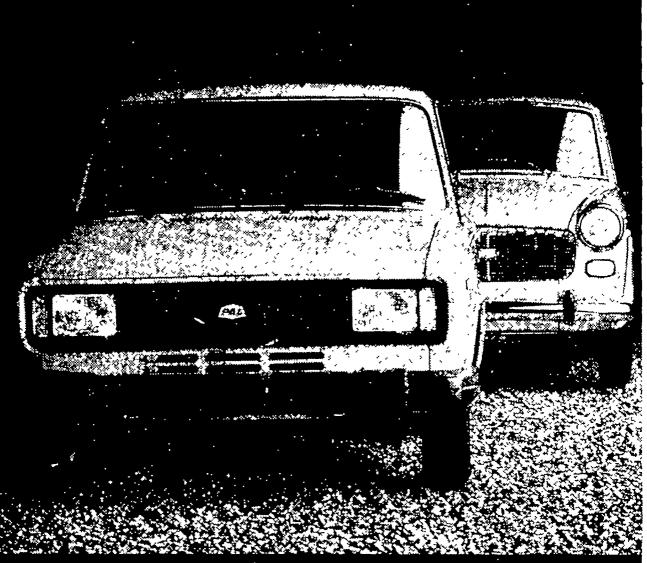
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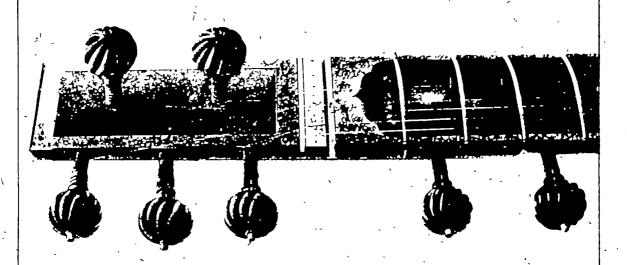


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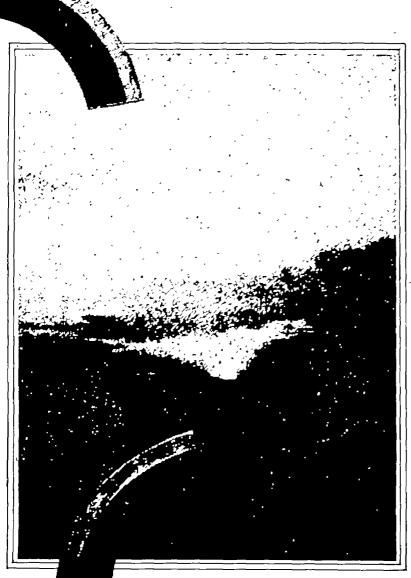
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### The problem

DESCRIBED as the 'worst plague of the century', AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) has emerged in the 1980s as a major threat to the health, development and survival of society. As the AIDS pandemic enters its second decade, its many social, cultural and legal dimensions are becoming increasingly clear.

Since AIDS was first recognized in homosexual men in the USA in 1981, we have learned a great deal about this mysterious new disease—about the virus that causes it (HIV or the human immunodeficiency virus), about the tests that can be used to diagnose it, and about the various risk factors that determine its spread. An important lesson that we have learned is that AIDS is not just a health problem. Rather, it is a societal problem with important social, cultural, and economic dimensions. A societal response is therefore required to combat this scourge.

Since it is unlikely that we will have a vaccine or a cure for AIDS in the foreseeable future (although intensive research efforts are underway), its spread can only be controlled through behavioural change. In India, as in the rest of Asia, the major method of spread of the virus is heterosexual. Sexual transmission accounts for over 75% of infections although this infection can also be transmitted through blood transfusion, from injections and from the infected mother to her unborn child. (AIDS is mainly spread by intravenous drug use in the North-East where there is heavy smuggling of heroin across South East Asia's 'Golden Triangle'.)

The AIDS pandemic is as yet in its early stages, especially in Asia, which is expected to become the epicentre of the pandemic in the 1990s. The present decade will witness a massive increase in AIDS cases and deaths in the world as people who are infected with HIV begin to fall ill. AIDS has been described as a 'silent volcano' because of the long time (8 to 10 years) that lapses between becoming infected with HIV and developing AIDS. The disease is uniformly fatall

According to projections by the World Health Organization (WHO), by the end of the 1990s there will be over a million AIDS cases and deaths a year.

the majority being in the developing countries—ábout half-a-million in Africa and about a quarter million in Asia. With these numbers, the economic consequences can be very serious as AIDS could claim up to half of national expenditures for health if the needs of AIDS patients were to be fully met. Estimation of costs is complicated because the loss of immunity with AIDS results in various other infections—referred to as opportunistic infections. The more serious of these, tuberculosis, is increasing dramatically in parallel with the AIDS pandemic.

But scale is not the only problem. We also have to deal with the fact that many vital elements of the pandemic are neither visible nor quantifiable. HIV infection itself is invisible. The actual number of full-blown AIDS cases, therefore, present just the tip of the iceberg under which lies a heavy burden of concealed morbidity. Its invisibility in the early stages results in a failure to recognize the threat and a denial of the problem. Delay in implementing effective policy interventions can result in serious and farreaching consequences.

India is estimated to have close to a million persons with HIV infection and over 125 reported AIDS cases. Could AIDS spread in India as it did in Sub-Saharan Africa, where entire villages have been wiped out leaving behind only the old and the very young? In India the population of sexually active adults is two-and-a-half times greater than the entire population of Sub-Saharan Africa and so the sheer numbers provide an enormous potential for the spread of the virus. Some fear that there will be more HIV infected persons in India at the turn of the century than there are in the entire world today.

It is difficult to visualize the devastating effects of the pandemic in our lifetime and beyond. What initially appeared to be an illness confined to homosexual men in the USA has, in a few years, affected millions of men, women and children worldwide. AIDS threatens the basic social institutions at the individual, family and community level, as well as economic and development initiatives at the national level. It selectively attacks people in their economic and socially most productive years and those responsible for the support and care of others. Consequently these deaths could deplete critical sections of

the labour force and leave behind families without providers and children without parents.

Another frustrating fact about AIDs is that unlike other diseases of developing countries, there are no public health strategies to combat it. Its spread is unaffected by improved sanitation or even nutrition. In the absence of a vaccine or a cure, preventive education is the only available means for controlling its spread. At the heart of prevention is persuading people to refrain from high risk sexual behaviourto have safe sex, to avoid multiple sexual partners, and to wear condoms. If men begin to use condoms, the number of new infections would plummet. But condoms are not available to all. Their quality is questionable. And even when they are available, men are reluctant to use them. AIDS is forcing society to face unpalatable truths about sexuality. It is a real challenge to bring about behavioural changes in the most intimate aspect of human life-sexual relationships. This is one reason why societies have frequently denied the problem: 'It cannot happen to usl' The blame is placed on others—on the 'West' or on the 'foreigner'.

After a period of initial denial, India is now slowly beginning to acknowledge the problem. In the states of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Manipur, where AIDS is a serious concern, there has been some response. But the other states are far behind. A first response in India, as in other countries, was an effort to ensure blood safety. But, many blood banks in the country are not licensed and professional donors are not easy to control. However, the proportion of HIV infection spread through blood transfusion is small (about 20%). Other measures are therefore needed to control its spread.

An important first step should be to raise the level of awareness of the public and to remove the numerous misconceptions that prevail. There is unfortunately a low level of awareness even among the intelligentsia and the medical professionals themselves are ill-informed. This has resulted in kneejerk, panic reactions such as refusal to admit infected persons in hospitals; detention of infected prostitutes in remand homes; and imprisonment of infected people. Such responses are counterproductive as valuable time is lost while the infection continues to

spread at an exponential rate. For example, just in the last three years, the level of HIV infection has escalated from 1% to 30% among prostitutes in Bombay, and AIDS has spread from major metropolitan cities to rural areas.

On the other hand, once the initial fear and hysteria were overcome, there have been some very innovative responses. In Manipur, for example, where 40 to 50% of intravenous drug users are HIV positive, many have been sent to jail, in some cases by their own parents. Among them are children of senior government officials as well as of those in businesses, politics and academics. The imprisonment of drug addicts and HIV positive individuals raises human rights issues. However, the jail authorities are organizing a programme of detoxification and rehabilitation through vocational training for these youngsters. In Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, a number of non-government organizations (NGOs) have responded to the AIDS crisis through a variety of innovative, community-based approaches to reach different vulnerable groups such as prostitutes and their clients, immigrants and factory workers and drug addicts.

Educating the community and engaging its involvement and participation is a key strategy, not only for preventing AIDS but for the care of the sick as well. Families, neighbourhood and other social support networks will eventually have to bear a major responsibility for the sick and the dying and also for the orphans and the aged who survive. Such collective action represents an indigenous, affordable response that would be sustainable. Therefore, counselling individuals and families is an important need. In fact, the training needs for personnel who would be expected to service AID prevention programmes are enormous. Imparting correct information through the mass and traditional media as well as through various other creative community-based programmes is essential.

There is, however, a major gap between getting information and acting on it to change behaviour. How many smokers know that smoking can cause lung cancer and yet continue to smoke? It is important to understand existing patterns of sexual behaviour in order to design effective strategies for changing high risk behaviour. Some of the early

results of research on sexual behaviour are beginning to explode several prevailing sexual myths such as 'Indians do not have pre-marital sex'; 'Indians are not open about their sexual lives'; 'homosexuality is a Western phenomenon'; and 'only the poor and uneducated go for paid sex'.

However, much more research is needed to understand the behaviour of particular population groups for whom communication messages to promote safe sex are designed. If responsible sexuality is the key to prevention, we must have answers to questions such as: What are the barriers to safe sex? Why is there a dissonant experience of correct knowledge of disease transmission with unsafe behaviour among different groups? How can condoms be popularized? What is the role of social marketing in promoting condom use? Most important, what makes behaviour change so difficult? Part of the answer is poverty and disadvantage.

AIDS prevention programmes have frequently targetted prostitutes as they are viewed as a 'ppol of infection' for AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Prostitutes have frequently been blamed and victimized. But what is the role of prostitutes in perpetuating the AIDS epidemic? If the efficiency of female to male transmission of infection is lower than the efficiency of male to female transmission (as studies are now beginning to show), then prostitutes may be at a lower risk of infecting their clients but at a higher risk of getting infected by them. What negotiating powers do prostitutes have with their clients to practice safe sex? Who makes the decisions? Should programmes, therefore, be targetted to prostitutes or to their clients?

Because of their social subordination women are particularly vulnerable. Not only are prostitutes at risk but so are other women. The link between powerlessness and the risk of exposure to HIV provides the key to understanding the special vulnerability of women to AIDs and STDs. Targetting of prostitutes has, unfortunately, distorted our understanding of the impact of AIDS on women. The overwhelming majority of women at risk are not prostitutes but ordinary women. Since women have little control over sexual decision-making, they are unable to use the information (even when they have it) to protect themselves. Women also carry the major responsibility for the care of the sick and have to bear the additional burden of coping with sickness and dying.

The impact of AIDS on women and children could be devastating. In Uganda, for example, HIV has already negated the declines in maternal and child mortality achieved by three decades of health interventions. As the AIDS pandemic progresses, more and more women and children are being infected with HIV and subsequently dying of AIDS. It is estimated that by the year 2000 as many as 8 million women and 10 million children will be infected with HIV. The possibility that HIV could perhaps be transmitted through breast milk, as shown by some of the recent

research in Africa, raises very serious public health concerns.

AIDS has brought about renewed interest in STDs, a neglected problem. STDs, particularly when associated with genital ulcers, are a significant risk factor in HIV transmission. Though data are limited, there appears to be a high incidence of STDs among poor tribal, rural and urban slum communities in India and these conditions could provide a fertile ground for the spread of the virus. Reported rates of HIV infection among STD cases have escalated from 1 to 5 per 1000 in 1986-87 to 5 to 10 per 1000 in 1991. Unlike AIDS, STDs can be treated. Clearly programmes for the prevention and control of STDs should receive high priority.

AIDS has also brought homosexuals out of the closet! A recent newsletter—Bombay Dost—is addressed to the gay community. Long-held taboos about homosexuality are now beginning to be broken. While homosexuality is still an offense under the Indian Penal Code, the right to privacy is a fundamental right under the Constitution of India. The stage seems to be set for a major debate to decriminalize homosexual acts between consenting adults.

On the other hand, we have little information about the practice of male prostitution. Although less visible than female prostitution, the social and cultural construction of male prostitution is extremely complex and diverse and the risks of HIV infection through male prostitution are indeed very real as seen from the experience of Brazil. India, too, has a significant community of male prostitutes. The hijras, for example, are much sought after in the sex trade. However, the behavioural links between sex work and HIV are little understood. Much research is needed to unravel these links for developing effective intervention programmes.

Responses to AIDS have shown that racism and racial discrimination unfortunately continue to persist. Racial interpretations of the origin and transmission of AIDS have led to discrimination under the pretext of combatting the disease. The AIDS pandemic has also brought into focus important legal and ethical issues. Myths about AIDS persist, generally involving fears about casual contact. Many still believe that HIV can spread through a handshake and that it is not safe to ride a bus or share a workplace with an infected person. Such misconceptions have resulted in assaults on the rights and dignity of HIV infected persons in the areas of work, education, housing and travel.

Because HIV is transmitted mainly through behaviour which is private, secret and often hidden, the infection or even the suspicion of infection has led to stigmatization and discrimination. The result of such discrimination is that those who fear severe personal consequences go 'underground': this can seriously jeopardize outreach and preventive care. It also endangers public health because the protection of the uninfected majority is inextricably bound with

the protection of the rights and dignity of the infected person.

Discriminatory practices have targetted persons that are subsumed under the so-called 'high risk' groups. These persons have been categorized according to the presumed risk that they are identified with. High risk groups have been defined on the grounds of sexual preferences, life-styles and race. Such categorization has challenged the rights of the individual. Prostitutes and drug addicts have suffered rejection and stigmatization and have been victimized under the guise of preventing ADS. This is not only an attack on basic human dignity but also undermines efforts to reach these people and to seek their active cooperation as important allies in the fight against ADS—an essential strategy for its prevention and control.

The right to life is a fundamental one. Since AIDS threatens human lives, several difficult questions must be addressed. In some cases, policy-makers have had to confront conflicting dilemmas and make difficult choices. For example, BIV infection is transmitted through drug abuse, an illegal activity. As the infection is spread through the sharing of needles, some governments have provided clean injection equipment through needle exchange programmes in order to protect lives which would otherwise be endangered. But these actions conflict with programmes to curb drug abuse. Policy-makers in Manupur and the other north-eastern states are currently facing this dilemma.

The protection of confidentiality is an important ethical isssue. Privacy can be jeopardized by compulsory screening and testing and by the establishment of registers for HIV infected persons. This has, in many cases, led to restrictions of the right to work, of freedom of movement and residence. and even access to health care. HIV testing is required for individual diagnosis. It is also necessary for disease surveillance—to track the level of infection and trends in the population. The Indian Council of Medical Research had the foresight to initiate a sero-surveillance programme in 1985. The rationale for blind, unlinked, anonymous sero-surveillance studies and screening policies is that the test results cannot be related to particular persons as blood samples are stripped of identifiers. These data can only be used for statistical purposes. Testing for diagnosis, however, raises several ethical problems. How should the test be used outside the context of blood banking? Should groups at risk for AIDS be encouraged to take the test? How forceful should such encouragement be? How should those who are tested be counselled? Can and should the test results be kept confidential?

Thus AIDS presents a real challenge because responses to this disease affect human rights and fundamental freedoms. However, it also represents an opportunity to affirm and reinforce human rights standards as they relate not only to AIDS but to the entire field of health. The physician's obligations to infected patients is a case in point as it has complex

moral, ethical and philosophical overtones. It encompasses questions of beneficence, philanthropy and altruism as well as issues of rights and duties.

The increasing number of infections that are resulting from mother to child transmission will pose more complex social, ethical and medical problems than have ever been previously addressed. Identification of HIV infection requires testing during pregnancy. Should all pregnant women be tested? Should an HIV positive woman continue her pregnancy or make an informed choice about abortion? If she chooses to continue her pregnancy, what special care does she need? What is the effect of the infection on the woman and her newborn child? Studies demonstate a 25 to 50% risk of transmission of HIV from mother to the child and most infected children die within a few years of birth. While these issues raise profound dilemmas that are not easily resolved, they do highlight the urgent need to mount a response for addressing the multifarious dimensions of the AIDS problem.

The interlinked health, development and humanitarian crisis caused by AIDS is becoming increasingly severe with the insidious entry of the virus into virtually all areas of the country. The threat to India is particularly alarming as the country is still struggling to cope with a heavy burden of poverty and ill-health. The potential costs to the nation are staggering. There are some who believe that funding for AIDS could distort health priorities by diverting funds from other problems that India is trying to address. The reverse side of the coin is that if funding is not made available for 'AIDS control, the economic consequences are likely to be devastating.

Donor response to the AIDS crisis in India has been slow. Only a few international organizations such as the WHO and the Ford Foundation have supported AIDS work over the past three to four years. WHO's Medium Term Plan for AIDS Prevention and Control has been operative through the government. The Ford Foundation was the first international agency to fund NGOs for AIDS work in India and has supported a number of very innovative community-based AIDS interventions as well as NGO networking initiatives and training and research projects. NORAD has recently initiated a programme to support NGOs and other bilateral donors are in discussion with the government for funding AIDS programmes. India has recently received an 85 million dollar loan from the World Bank for AIDs control—a quantum jump from the current allocation. Will these funds significantly enhance response to the AIDS crisis? How can we fight complacency and denial of the problem? How can we generate the political will for mobilizing joint action so that the social and economic impact of AIDS can be minimized? How can we strengthen and expand the response of communities which is, in fact, the only sustainable strategy? What can be done to mount a national level effort to combat this monstrous plague before it is too late?

### Some facts

A. N. MALAVIYA

WAY back in 1981, Michael Gottlieb, a sharp young American physician from Los Angeles who specialized in clinical immunology, noticed some extremely unusual features in a group of otherwise healthy young homosexual men. He noted that their bodies were being repeatedly invaded by germs which are always present in our environment but almost never attack normal human beings. In medical jargon such germs are called opportunists and the infections produced by them are known as opportunistic infections. Ordinarily, these are seen in persons whose defence system, especially the immune system, is damaged or depressed due to the intake of some drugs (anti-cancer drugs, steroids, drugs used for preventing. rejection of organ transplants) or in those who have received radiation treatment for cancer. Gottlieb was

puzzled: how could normal healthy persons show features of immuno-deficiency? His findings, which he reported in the summer of 1981, alerted the entire scientific community around the globe. Soon, the search for its cause was on.

Within two years of Gottlieb's report, the famous French virologist Luc Montaigner, and his team at Institute Pasteur, Paris, reported the isolation of a new virus from patients with this newly described discase. Soon there followed the discovery by Robert Gallo-well-knownvirologist based at the National Institute of Health, Bethesda, USA of a method not only of isolating this virus but its propagation in laboratory test-tubes. This discovery made it possible to study the new virus in detail. Efforts of other virologists and molecular biologists like

Max Essex and William Hazeltine of Boston, as well as scientists in several other countries, helped in identifying the cause of this new disease.

To the utter surprise of the scientists, it was discovered that this disease was being caused by a new retrovirus hitherto unknown to human beings: After some early confusion and controversy, the virus was given the scientific name of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Viruses are the tiniest known form of life. By themselves they cannot do much. They are simply small bundles of genetic informationcarrying chemical substances called nucleic acids. However, for generating themselves, these bundles of nucleic acids must first invade a living cell which they can then hijack and use for multiplying their own life forms. This they do successfully by invading the cells of animals, human beings, and even bacteria. Thus, viruses are basically parasites i.e. they have to live on or within some other life form for their survival.

Fortunately, the majority of viruses complete their life-cycle quickly. They enter the body cells, hijack the cell machinery of the host and reprogramme it for manufacturing more virus, particles. Most of the viral particles may then leave the host body in order to invade some other healthy living being and repeat the whole life-cycle again. Common colds, influenza, measles, chicken pox, German measles, herpes, several types of diarrhoeal diseases, and the more serious and prolonged hepatitis (jaundice), are some common and well known viral illnesses. Of course, the deadliest and most infectious of them all, the small pox virus, has been more or less eliminated from the face of this earth with the successful use of a mass vaccination programme against it.

In the life-cycle of ordinary viruses (and in fact all living beings), genetic information flows forward from DNA→RNA→proteins. But HIV starts with RNA, goes backwards and generates its DNA, then starts the forward journey by again producing RNA, followed finally by the production of proteins which go to make the fully developed virus particles.

Because of this first backward step in their life-cycle, this class of viruses has been given the name retroviruses.

Ketroviruses have another unique feature. After invading the body, they enter their target cells and then integrate themselves into the genetic material of the host by becoming part of it. In this way they are completely disguised and safe; they cannot be seen or recognized. During this inactive period they remain harmless to the host. In this dormant form (called provirus) they can persist in the body for prolonged periods, until they get a chance to make mischief. They get such an opportunity if their host has been indulging in habits which are harmful to health or if he contracts an intercurrent infection. The factors which trigger the dormant retrovirus towards active proliferation are called co-factors. They are important in converting an asymptomatic infection into an active disease.

HIV is a clever virus. Instead of infecting any old cell in the body, it simply attacks and finishes off the body's central defence system itself, i.e. the immune system. Here, too, it goes straight for the cell which is at the hub of all the important functions of the immune system: the CD4 and the helper lymphocytes. HIV slowly but progressively damages the CD4+ cells, thus steadily making the body susceptible and vulnerable to attack by all varieties of microbes present in the environment, i.e. the opportunists which produce opportunistic infections. In persons with a normal immune system these opportunists are of no consequence. They get destroyed before they can do any harm. In persons with HIV infection on the other hand, these opportunistic infections steadily keep destroying the defenseless body of the victim until he finally succumbs to the disease and dies.

In the early days when HIV was first discovered, it was thought that the virus only infected CD4 cells. But later studies have shown that although the main cell infected by HIV is the CD4, in fact the virus infects almost all important cells in the body including the brain, kidney, bone marrow, gut etcetera. HIV

is thus a more generalized infection of the body.

The simplest and the least confusing way to understand HIV infection is to see it as an infection which proceeds along three stages. These are the prolonged asymptomatic stage; the early clinical stage; and the late clinical stage (generally referred to as AIDS).

The asymptomatic stage comprises the first five to ten years of the infection when the virus lies dormant in the genes. The infected person feels normal, looks normal and carries on with life like any other normal person, very often without the knowledge that he is infected with HIV. However, such a person is infected and fully capable of spreading the infection to others. Although this stage is of little clinical relevance, it is the key to understanding why HIV is spreading unchecked around the world; and why control programmes have generally not been successful When an infected person without symptoms, indulges in unprotected sex, or shares needles with other people for injecting substances or drugs without cleaning them adequately, or if his donated blood is transfused, without screening, to an unsuspecting recipient, he is transmitting the disease to others. The irony is that it is very difficult to detect asymptomatic HIV infected persons because, since they feel and look normal, they rarely visit doctors. Short of doing a special blood test there is no way to detect such an infection. But how can the blood of every individual on the face of this earth be tested?

In the next stage of early HIV clinical disease (two to five years after contracting the HIV infection) many persons develop enlarged glands in their armpits and neck. The glands are totally painless and free of any symptoms. They continue to persist for months and years without producing any apparent illhealth. Doctors call it persistent generalized lymphadenopathy (PGL) syndrome. Persons may carry on like this for years without any further progress in their disease. Later on, symptoms like repeated attacks of diarrhoea, drenching night-sweats, severe loss of weight, and extreme weakness may start. Doctors often

call it the AIDS-related complex (ARC). These are warning symptoms of imminent late clinical HIV disease. The majority of persons with ARC develop late clinical HIV disease within two years.

The third and final stage of HIV infection, i.e. the late clinical HIV disease, appears after, on an average, 9 to 10 years from the time of contracting the HIV infection. This is because HIV takes time to destroy the immune system of the host to the extent that opportunistic infections and opportunistic cancers start occurring. This clinical stage is easily recognized by doctors as an illness with severe depression/deficiency of the immune system.

Unfortunately, the word 'AIDS' has been stigmatized to such a degree that persons with late HIV clinical disease are often discriminated against not only in health care settings but also in the society at large. Given this, it may well be advisable to drop the word AIDS and instead use the term HIV infection with the three stages mentioned above to describe the disease. This will at least eliminate the stigma that is attached to AIDS.

The progression rate of HIV infection towards clinical illness varies. On an average, about 20% of infected persons become symptomatic at the end of five years, 50% at the end of 10 years and, it is projected that about 80% or more will be sick at the end of 20 years. The prognosis for persons with late clinical HIV disease is usually poor. According to international statistics recorded in 1990, all persons diagnosed as having AIDs before June 1984 have died, as have 92% of those diagnosed between July 1985 and June 1986, and 49% of those diagnosed since July 1986. Such data are not available for India as yet, but the work done by HIV surveillance centres of the Indian Council of Medical Research/DGHS AIDS cell indicates that the majority of cases diagnosed as late clinical HIV disease are already dead.

Interestingly, the modes of transmission of this infection was found before the causative agent was dis-

covered. Extensive studies have confirmed that the only modes of transmission of this infection are first, through sexual contact with an infected person: This can be through sex between men and women, or between two men. Having many sexual partners carries a specially high risk. Therefore, groups such as commercial sex workers and their clients are particularly vulnerable.

The second one is the direct entry into the body of blood or certain body fluids from HIV infected persons. These include sexual secretions. There are certain other body fluids but they are only of relevance to health care workers (it may be pointed out that the list does not contain saliva). This may occur under the following conditions: use of contaminated injection needles or other skin piercing instruments etcetera which have been used on an HIV infected person earlier, not sterilized properly and used on the next (uninfected) person; transfusion of contaminated blood and blood products; and from the blood of HIV infected pregnant women to their newborn babies. It seems that infected mothers can pass HIV to the baby in their womb through the placenta. The chances of this are more when the woman has clinical symptoms of the disease.

Dince HIV infection does not spread through air or water or simple social contact, it is not contagious in the same sense as measles, chicken pox, influenza, common, colds, tuberculosis, typhoid, cholera, even plague and small pox. HIV infection is like hepatitis B or syphillis: it spreads through blood-to-blood contact or through a sexual route. Therefore, it cannot be contracted through the sharing of plates, cups, cutlery, swimming pools or toilets; kissing, coughing, sneezing or spit-ting; sharing of public places or using amenities like transport; or by attending the same school or workplace etcetera.

Interestingly, a large number of lay persons seem to be worried that blood sucking insects may spread the infection. Fortunately, extensive research has shown that this is not so. HIV is not secreted in the saliva of a mosquito. Moreover, mosquito

probosis does not have enough volume to act as a 'flying syringe'. Lastly, extensive study in Belle Glade, Florida, an intensively mosquito infested place where HIV is also prevalent, has not shown any evidence of its spread through mosquitoes.

L here are no reports of nurses, doctors, ambulance drivers and other health care workers becoming infected with HIV or developing ATDS from direct contact with a patient except in two circumstances. First, a very small number of health care workers have developed HIV infection following accidental injury with needles or sharp instruments contaminated with HIV infected blood, although the risk of this occurring is much lower than for the hepatitis B virus. Secondly, contact between infected body fluids and damaged skin or mucous membranes (including the conjunctiva) has occasionally led to the transmission of infection. There have been less than 100 cases reported worldwide and this number must be seen in the context of the innumerable contacts between health care workers and infected individuals over the past decade. However, the risk of occupational infection, though small, is real and the consequences severe. Health care workers should therefore follow standard precautions which substantially eliminate such risk.

There is a commonly held belief that donating blood could lead to ADS. This is not true. Most blood banks and other blood collection centres always use sterile equipment and disposable needles. There is thus no chance that a needle used for one blood donor would be used for another. The need for blood is always acute, and people other than those engaging in risk activity are urged to continue to donate blood as they have in the past. At some advanced medical centres in India, people who have scheduled (nonemergency) operations can even arrange to have their own blood taken some weeks before the operation if necessary. AIIMS, Delhi, is one such centre.

But how does one know whether one has contracted HIV infection? There are a variety of specialized

blood tests which can detect the presence of this infection. The two most common ones are the ELISA and Western Blot (WB) tests, ELISA is the preferred test as it is simple and it is possible to obtain the result within a few hours. WB is extremely laborious, expensive and lengthy, and is done mainly to confirm the existence of the infection. These days, highly specific as well as sensitive ELISA tests have become available. If the test is carried out by using ELISA kits manufactured by two different manufacturers and the results are positive, it can be taken as a definite affirmation of HIV infection, thus obviating the need for the expensive and time-consuming WB test. Here, it is important that throughout the diagnostic process, the person must be counselled and due attention paid to the confidentiality of the results in order to avoid discrimination.

An important point in relation to the HIV blood test is that it becomes positive only after about two-and-a-half months of actually contracting the HIV infection. This period, during which the person is actually infected and can pass on the infection to others but during which the blood test gives a negative result, is called the window period. Thus, the blood test can never ensure that a particular person is not infected.

Whenever and wherever AIDS is discussed, the first impulse of most people is to say that somehow, everyone must be tested for HIV infection. But the question of HIV testing is a complex one. It involves ethical issues and issues related to human rights. The only situations where HIV testing would be useful are as follows:

1. There are persons who indulge in the high risk activities mentioned earlier in this article. These persons may themselves want to know whether they are HIV infected or not, so that if they are, they could practise protected sex (using condoms) to ensure that their sexual partners do not get infected. They may volunteer for HIV testing. In this situation the HIV test should be available. However, they must be counselled to change their high risk behaviour. Their test result may be negative, but they may well be in the window period

and, therefore, still capable of infecting their sex partners. Or, they may be negative today but soon turn positive because they did not change their high risk behaviour.

- 2. The same situation could arise if a person has received a transfusion of blood not properly screened for HIV infection. He may like to know whether he is infected, so that he can protect his sex partner.
- 3. Blood banks must ensure that the blood stored by them is safe. They must carry out HIV testing for this purpose.
- 4. The health department may want to know the HIV infection load in the population. For this, it may start an HIV screening programme on different groups of people and in different areas. This last situation raises the question of whether testing should be carried out on blood samples without knowing the names of donors. The reasoning is that if HIV positive persons are identified, they may become victims of discrimination and ostracism. On the other hand, it could be argued that once it becomes known that some person is HIV infected, he/she can be helped with proper counselling while still keeping the results confidential within the health set-up. However, because of the knowledge that discrimination against HIV infected persons is rampant in all walks of life including the health care setting, it is recommended that only anonymous screening surveys be carried out.'

he testing of a patient suspected of HIV infection is also a controvercial issue. Doctors argue that they may want to do so in order to confirm the diagnosis of a disease they suspect the patient may have; and (ii) to ensure proper safety precautions for themselves and for the other health care workers. While there may be some strength in the first argument, the second one is unacceptable. There is no way that every person who is seen by a doctor can be tested. Therefore, testing a few and not testing the thousands of others who come to the hospital, will only create a false sense of security.

Moreover, as has already been pointed out, testing is not fool-

proof: the tested person may well be in the window period. Also, studies have shown that knowing the HIW status of an individual does not prevent or improve the incidence of accidental exposure. In fact, it makes health care workers more nervous, leading to more chances of accidental exposure. Last but not least, inspite of all efforts, there are chances of irrational discrimination against persons known to be HIV infected.

Because of these reasons it has now been internationally recommended and accepted that universal precautions must be followed in health care settings. This simply means that health care workers must consider every person visiting them as potentially HIV infected and take precautions in every situation with every patient without discrimination.

In the absence of a cure or a vaccine, prevention remains the key to containing the AIDS epidemic. It is recommended that the following steps be taken to control the spread of this disease:

- i. People must accept responsibility for protecting themselves against infection. This means avoiding intimate sexual contact with persons whose 'risk factor' history is unknown. This includes sexual, as well as intravenous drug-using history.
- ii. Condoms, properly used, prevent or at least significantly reduce the spread of HIV as well as many other sexually transmitted diseases.
- iii. Needles and syringes for intravenous and other injections should never be used more than once, since this practice carries the risk of transmission of a variety of infectious diseases, including HIV.
- iv. People who have engaged in or continue to engage in high risk activities, for example female and male prostitutes, users of intravenous drugs, and their sexual partners, must not donate blood, semen, tissues or organs.
- v. People infected with HIV should accept the moral responsibility of never placing another person at risk. In addition, counselling, including

testing where appropriate, is strongly recommended for those who do not know whether they are infected but who are at high risk of carrying the infection.

vi. Health care establishments should ensure appropriate infection control methods both for patients as well for the doctors working there.

It is now accepted that mass education campaigns about HIV and how to prevent its acquisition are the only weapons available for controlling the spread of this infection in the community.

Lt is claimed that there could be anywhere from 5 to 10 million HIV infected persons in the world today. Certain geographic areas seem to have more HIV infected persons than others. Thus, Sub-Saharan African countries, North America and Western Europe seem to have more HIV infected people than other parts of the world. But, recent observations indicate that HIV may be finding a cozy home in third world countries. Densely populated areas of Asia and the Pacific seem to show a marked increase in HIV infection rate. The rapidity with which the infection is spreading in this area has become a major health issue for the region. For example, Thailand, India, Myanmar and some other countries are showing an explosive rate of HIV infection in persons with at-risk behaviour, e.g. clients of commercial sex workers, paid blood donors, intravenous drug users, and those who have received repeated blood transfusions for some medical reason (haemophiliacs, thalasemics and others).

The AIDS cell of the Directorate General of Health Services, Government of India, Ministry of Health, in its monthly update of 1 April 1992, has given the following figures: of the 13,48,965 persons tested (mostly from among those practising high-risk activities) 5.39% are Hiv infected. 49% of these are persons indulging in heterosexual commercial sex, 19% are intravenous drug users, 16% are blood donors (probably professional donors who are invariably promiscuous and indulge in sex with commercial sex workers). These are alarming figures, but they

only relate to those practising high risk activities.

During the past year the Ministry of Health has initiated extensive programmes to train doctors and nurses in the management of HIV infection. Special facilities have been created in several regions of India for the care of persons with clinical HIV disease. Surveillance centres and counselling facilities are also being set up in several places.

However, whenever there is any talk about the treatment for HIV clinical disease, it is commonly asked: Since there is no treatment for it, why bother? How can you treat a disease for which there is no cure? And so on. Very few people realize that most common chronic diseases are incurable. Diabetes, high blood pressure, asthama, cancer, many heart diseases, most neurological diseases, many chronic skin diseases, several forms of arthritis etcetera, have no cure. Nevertheless, we do 'treat' them.

 $oldsymbol{A}$ ctually, what we do is give 'symptomatic' treatment to control the symptoms of the disease, treat its complications and make the patient comfortable. This is exactly what is done in the case of HIV clinical disease as well. When HIV patients get opportunistic infections like tuberculosis, fungal infections, diarrhoea, pneumonia, meningitis and so on, we treat these infections so that the patients can go home and lead a near-normal, socially productive and useful life. These episodes may occur every few months and this cycle may go on for several years. But this is what is meant when we talk about 'treatment' for HIV clinical disease.

Of course, there is the well-publicized and widely known drug variously called zydovudine, AZT or azidothymidine. It does not cure HIV infection. Nevertheless, it does slow down the progress of HIV infection towards clinical disease. The drug, however, is so expensive (approximately, \$ 10,000 per year) that it would be out of the reach of most Indians. It is also associated with significant side effects. Moreover, it has to be imported as it is not yet being marketed in India. For these reasons its use on Indian patients is not a practical proposition.

### Women's vulnerability

PREMA RAMACHANDRAN

THE second half of the 20th century witnessed tremendous improvement in maternal and child health. Improved diagnostic tests, anaesthetic and operative techniques, availability of banked blood, antibiotics and other drugs gave physicians an unparalleled opportunity to tackle the health problems of women and children. Efforts to reach services to the needy through the primary health care approach were making headway. Everyone optimistically assumed that since progressive global improvement in health status is inevitable, health for all in India would be achieved, if not by 2000 AD, at least a couple of decades later.

With hindsight, one can see that the widespread availability of contraceptives to prevent pregnancy and antibiotics for the treatment of STDs led to behavioural changes in the population. The increased sexual promiscuity which resulted set the stage for a potentially explosive STD epidemic. Looked at from this perspective, the AIDS pandemic has all the inevitability of a Greek tragedy. It nevertheless came as a rude shock to us.

By mid-1980s it was realized that women and children are among the worst affected segments of the population. A rapid assessment of the impact followed and today we have global data on the epidemiology, pathophysiology and clinical manifestations of AIDS in these two vulnerable segments of the population. Based on this data, measures to minimize the adverse impact have been defined, which include provision for care of AIDS cases and seropositive persons, strengthening of MCH care and supportive services and health education.

Of the three major modes of HIV world-wide, sexual transmission transmission has proved to be the most inefficient method of spreading HIV infection; the risk of infection has been estimated to range from 1/1000 to 1/100 exposures. However, because of the large size of the population and frequency of the exposure, sexual transmission accounts for over 75% of infections. Women are more likely to get infected by, rather than infect, men. The presence of sexually transmitted diseases, especially ulcerative lesions of the genitalia, increase the risk of Hiv transmission.

Parenteral transmission due to blood/blood product infusion is the most efficient method of transmission, with the estimated transmission rate being 90%. However, with improved coverage of screening of

blood/blood products, this mode is likely to become rare. The risk of parenteral transmission following the use of contaminated syringe needles is estimated to range from 1-5/1000 exposures. It accounts for the observed HIV infection in IVD users, and accidental infection in health care delivery. Parenteral transmission is currently estimated to account for 5-10% of HIV infections in different regions but is likely to become less common by 2000 AD.

Perinatal infection occurs in 20-50% of infants born to seropositive women. It is estimated that perinatal transmission accounts for 1-10% of all infections in different regions. The contribution of this mode of infection is likely to increase over the next decade when HIV infection becomes more prevalent in Asia.

It is estimated that the average duration of the asymptomatic period in HIV infected adults may last from 8 to 10 years. Once the symptoms develop, progression of the disease, especially in developing countries, is rapid: the majority of AIDS cases die within two years of diagnosis. The progression of HIV infection in infancy and childhood is also rapid: 50% of the infected infants die by the time they are two years old and over 90% do not survive five years.

The illness and eventual demise of the mother from HIV infection has a catastrophic impact on the well being of the entire family. The infected infants may succumb more rapidly in the absence of maternal care while the uninfected infants face the grim prospect of becoming orphans early in childhood, with all the attendant adverse consequences.

Using all the data available from different sources, who estimates that currently there are 8 to 10 million HIV infected persons in the world. Of these, more than 3 million are women: and a million are children. Over two-thirds of all the infected persons live in a developing country and have little access to health care. In the USA and Europe, the HIV epidemic curve appears to be plateauing. In Africa and Asia, however, the steep rise continues. Currently 2 million HIV infected persons live in the US; 5 million in Western

Europe; 6 million in Sub-Saharan Africa and 1 million in Asia. Unless very effective intervention programmes are implemented, the number of HIV infected persons in Asia is expected to cross those in Africa by the mid-1990s and by the year 2000, Asia might have the largest number of HIV infected persons in the world.

WHO estimates that by 2000 AD about 40 million men, women and children are likely to be infected by HIV, with the cumulative number of AIDS cases around 10 million. The heterosexual and perinatal will be the most common modes of HIV transmission, and over 75% of the infected persons will be living in developing countries. Providing health care for these is likely to further strain the already severely strained resources of these countries. By 1989 an estimated 1.5 million uninfected infants were born to HIV infected women. Most of them are likely to lose one or both their parents as a result of AIDS and become orphans. This figure is also likely to double by the year 1992. Providing appropriate support to these homeless waifs until they become adults is a task that is likely to tax the welfare departments to the utmost.

Prior to the advent of AIDS, UN had projected that the under-five mortality rate would decline from 164 per 1000 live births in 1988 to 130 per 1000 by 2000 AD. Current estimates indicate that under-five mortality was 166 per 1000 in 1988 and the figure is likely to rise to 185 by the year 2000. A similar trend is likely in maternal and adult mortality rates. HIV has thus wiped out the decline in mortality rate achieved by three decades of toil.

AIDS will result in the death of men and women in the reproductive age group, leaving the elderly without support. Women and children will become doubly vulnerable as AIDS casualties and AIDS survivors. The economic impact of the disease is likely to become very important in the long run. Hospitalization for HIV related diseases may overwhelm the health services resources and manpower by the mid-1990s. Available data show that in some African

countries 80% of hospital beds are filled with AIDS patients and that AIDS will claim up to half of all national expenditure for health in some countries.

There is no doubt that the direct costs of AIDS will be substantial, but the indirect cost of the pandemic will be even more prohibitive. There will be a decrease in workforce productivity due to HIV infection. Millions of young adult lives will be lost resulting in a dramatic loss of potential productive years to society. AIDS related sickness and deaths will affect the urban industrial sectors to begin with, but later, it is likely that agriculture, which remains the backbone of many areas, will be affected. Eventually the entire socio-economic system will be eroded resulting in a tremendous negative effect on national development.

India has the unique distinction of being the first country in the world to initiate systematic nationwide sero-surveillance among asymptomatic men and women belonging to high and low risk groups to obtain information on the magnitude and major modes of HIV transmission before AIDS cases were reported from the country. In 1986, ICMR organized a national sero-surveillance programme in close collaboration with Directorate General of Health Services (DGHs) and the state health services. The programme utilized the existing health care infrastructure with minimum essential additional inputs.

The data collected by the national network of reference and surveillance centres during the first six months showed that HIV infection was present in different parts of the country, and that heterosexual promiscuity was the major mode of transmission in India. Although the next 18 months of the survey indicated that the magnitude of infection in India was low, it became obvious that the infection is not confined to promiscuous men and women. HIV infection was detected among blood donors, spouses of promiscuous persons, children born to seropositive women and persons receiving blood/ blood product infusions. It was also clear that the scropositivity rates among promiscuous men and women

and blood donors had shown a steep rise between 1986 and 1991.

Right from the inception of the programme, ICMR investigated not only the so-called high risk groups—promiscuous men and women, recipients of blood/blood products, IV drug users—but also low risk groups like pregnant women. Detection of asymptomatic seropositive persons in the low risk group had to a large extent contributed to the realization in the country that HIV can affect all segments of the population, leading to a consequent reduction in the tendency to discriminate against HIV positive persons.

Based on the available data, , ICMR estimates that there are between 0.4 million to a million HIV infected persons in India. Estimates on the magnitude of the silent epidemic of HIV in India based on data collected by the ICMR sero-surveillance, together with the data from Thailand, led to the upward revision of WHO's estimates of HIV infection load in Asia. This, in turn, has led to the shift in the focus of global AIDS control programmes to Asia in an effort to slow down the epidemic, so that the Sub-Saharan tragedy is not repeated again.

The first seropositive persons detected in India were sex workers in Tamil Nadu. Since then, centres in different states undertook the screening of a substantial number of sex workers. Data from these studies indicate that there had been a slow but steady increase in the seropositivity rate from 10% in 1986 to 30% in 1991. Intervention programmes are currently underway in Bombay and several other cities to reduce HIV transmission to and from commercial sex workers.

Seropositive pregnant women (detected by screening during pregnancy) and pregnancy in known seropositive women were reported by sero-surveillance centres in as early as 1986-87. Data from the ICMR sero-surveillance indicate that between one-third to a half of the HIV sero-positive persons in India are women. Most of them had been infected by heterosexual transmission; many do not belong to high risk groups. The majority are in the asymptomatic

phase and do not know that they are infected.

It has been variously estimated that between 100,000 and 400,000 women in India are infected by HIV. Every year, approximately 20,000 out of the 24 million deliveries in India are likely to occur in seropositive women. Prior to the HIV epidemic, India and Sub-Saharan Africa had similar MCH profiles. The modes of HIV transmission in these two areas are also similar. The major difference is that apparently HIV entered India a decade later. Effective implementation of intervention programmes can avert the re-enactment of the Sub-Saharan tragedy in India.

Contrary to initial reports, pregnancy does not have any adverse impact on the course of HIV infection. Immunodepression associated with pregnancy does not accelerate the progression from the asymptomatic phase to AIDS and death. HIV infection per se does not appear to have any adverse effect either on the health of pregnant women, the course of pregnancy, labour, peur-perium or lactation. It readily crosses the transplacental barrier. Available data indicate that intrauterine infection occurs in 25 to 50% of pregnant women. There is some evidence that the risk of ru infection is lower in asymptomatic women, especially those who have a higher antibody titre. The risk of intrauterine infection is higher in women who are viraemic-these include women who have very recently acquired the infection and those with AIDS. Infection risk is reported to be higher in women who had earlier delivered an infected offspring.

In the last two years, there has been speculation about whether the use of drugs that reduce viraemia, such as azidothymidine and CD4, during pregnancy would increase foetal salvage. However, to do this, one would have to weigh the possible adverse effect of these drugs on pregnant women and the foetus against potential benefits. There may also be major ethical problems in conducting even clinical trials to test the hypothesis. HIV infection is associated with a higher rate of premature delivery and intrauterine growth retardation. It is possible that at least part of this association might be attributable to coexistent risk factors like smoking, drug addictions and anaemia in HIV infected women.

The fate of the unborn child is the major reason for concern in the context of HIV infection in pregnancy. To prevent these potential calamities, medical termination of pregnancy (MTP) may be done in the first trimester, if the patient wishes it. Women who want to continue pregnancy should be provided with adequate and appropriate antenatal, intrapartum and postnatal care. Intensive neonatal care facilities should be available for looking after the low birth weight neonates. Every effort should be made to counsel the mother to adopt appropriate contraception soon after delivery and teach her the importance of correct and consistent use of condoms. Stringent precautions should be taken to prevent the accidental spread of HIV infection while providing health care, especially during delivery.

Screening for HIV during pregnancy along the lines of screening for syphilis during pregnancy has many ardent advocates. The major reason for screening for STDs like syphilis in pregnancy is to provide therapeutic intervention to prevent ru infection. This justification does not exist for HIV. Counselling for MTP in early pregnancy in seropositive pregnant women may provide the rationale in our country, but there are several practical problems that come in the way of the proposed HIV screening in India: (a) most infected women do not belong to any recognizable risk groups; (b) screening of all pregnant women is impossible because the majority do not attend antenatal clinics; and (c) screening facilities are neither available nor affordable. Most infected women will thus continue to remain undetected.

There is, nevertheless, a need to screen all pregnant women. The advantages of undergoing HIV testing are many and should be clearly explained. In India, the majority of the people, even those in high risk groups, are not seropositive. Screening would therefore provide these women with proof that they are uninfected, relieve them of their anxiety and possibly ensure that they

do not encounter any future risk of HIV infection.

For those with HIV infection, there are now drugs to prolong the asymptomatic period and alleviate their suffering. These women could take steps to ensure that they do not spread the infection to their partners/family. Identification of seropositive pregnant women and follow-up of their children is the only method by which children requiring special care in the future could be identified long before the need arises. The time available could be utilized in identifying the uninfected children who require societal support for their upbringing, so that they do not suffer the severe adverse effects of being 'AIDS orphans'.

Lt is imperative that safe and effective contraceptive care is provided for all seropositive women because of the known adverse consequences of htv infection during pregnancy. In developed countries, condoms and spermicides containing monoxynol-9 have been advocated because they afford protection not only against pregnancy but also against HIV infection. In India, the current acceptability and use effectivity of condoms is very low. Incorrect and inconsistent use of condoms could lead to a false sense of security and consequent increase in HIV infection rates. It could also result in unwanted pregnancies with all the attendant hazards to the mother-child dyad. In view of this, it is essential that health education regarding the advantages of condom use, the correct method of use and the need for its consistent use be initiated to improve acceptability and effectivity. Subsequently, condom promotion for the prevention of AIDS could be taken up.

So far, no adverse interactions between any of the currently used-contraceptives and HIV infection have been reported. In view of the known adverse consequences of pregnancy in HIV infected persons, it is essential to provide safe, effective and suitable contraceptive care to all HIV infected individuals. The choice of contraceptive for individuals should take into account the risks and benefits of the method, life-style and contraceptive preferences of the individual, avail-

ability of the contraceptive and existing health care facilities. However, in addition to the use of contraception of their choice, all seropositive persons should be taught to correctly and consistently use condoms for reducing the risk of hiv transmission. It is essential to ensure that needles, syringes and other equipment needed for fertility regulation are properly sterilized before use.

Due to limited laboratory facilities, lack of infrastructure and the prohibitive cost, it is not possible to screen all contraceptive advice seekers for HTV infection in India. Thus, in the majority of cases, contraceptive care will have to be provided without any knowledge of the HIV infection status of the individual. The WHO expert group on contraception and HIV infection has recommended that under these circumstances, contraceptive care can continue to be provided according to the existing guidelines, even though the HIV status of the person is not known.

III IV has been isolated from breast milk. Intense research efforts over the last four years have resulted in documentation of a few instances where the infant might have been infected through breast milk, but this mode of HIV transmission is very rare. All available data suggest that breast feeding will protect the HTV infected from other infections and may even prolong their survival period. In India, this advantage will by far outweigh the small potential risk of mv infection through breast feeding. Therefore, breast feeding is desirable in children born to seropositive mothers.

In India very few of the infected mothers can be detected because universal HIV testing is not possible. Breast feeding is essential for infant survival and growth especially among poorer segments of the population, because infant food formulae are neither affordable nor safe. Hence breast feeding by the biological mothers should continue irrespective of the HIV infection status of the mother or infant, known or unknown. Promotion of breast feeding should continue to be the national policy.

The increasing prevalence and awareness of HIV infection has led

to concern about the efficacy and safety of immunization of HIV infected infants and children. Experience with live and inactivated vaccines in HIV infected children suggests that the immunization is free from major short-term side effects. Risks and known consequences of natural infection are likely to be graver than the risks associated with vaccination, even with live attenuated vaccines. Taking all these factors into consideration, who has recommended that all asymptomatic HIV infected children receive all standard vaccines, both live and inactivated; and that those with ARC/AIDS symptoms should receive all other vaccines except всс.

Since extensive HIV testing of pregnant women is not possible in developing countries like India, the majority of seropositive infants remain undetected. At present there are no tests for detecting infected infants. Under these circumstances, who has recommended that all asymptomatic infants receive all standard vaccines irrespective of their HIV status, known or unknown. The existing immunization programmes in the country should therefore be vigorously pursued.

L he advent of HIV infection in the community is yet another reason to intensify efforts to provide optimal MCH care. Providing appropriate contraceptive care to all eligible women would substantially reduce the birth of infected infants. It is essential that all aseptic precautions are meticulously adhered to during the provision of antenatal, intrapartum and contraceptive care, so that accidental HIV infection is prevented. Breast feeding, which is the best form of infant feeding, should be encouraged as the method of ensuring infant survival and growth and birth spacing. Irrespective of HIV infection status, all apparently healthy infants should continue to receive immunization against the six major vaccine preventable diseases. With the introduction of mandatory screening of blood/blood products, the risk of HIV infection in children through parenteral transmission is likely to be minimized.

Public concern regarding Americans from the knowledge that there

is no curative therapy or prophylactic vaccine for this infection. HIV per se does not kill; it is infections and malignancies that occur in the immuno-compromised persons that are responsible for the ensuing suffering and death. The available meagre data from India indicate that tuberculosis and amoebiasis are two common infections in immuno-compromised HIV infected persons. However, safe and effective drugs for the treatment of these two infections are now available. Also global research efforts have resulted in better diagnostic tests and effective drugs (though many do have severe side effects) for the treatment of several opportunistic infections seen in AIDS patients.

AIDS patients require hospitalization for the treatment of acuté pathogenic or opportunistic infections and life-threatening emergencies. Many require emergency or elective surgical intervention. Malignancies occurring in AIDS patients also require appropriate management. Facilities for all necessary investigations and therapeutic procedures should thus be made available in the nodal hospitals. Every effort should be made to provide optimal care for AIDS patients, especially during acute infections and lifethreatening emergencies, even though this effort is likely to strain the already meagre monetary and manpower resources available for health care in India.

During the chronic and terminal phases of their illness, AIDS patients require symptomatic treatment. These patients have to be provided with care in hospices so that they can spend the last days of their life in comfort and with dignity. Special efforts must be made to explore the feasibility of involving non-governmental/voluntary agencies for providing this type of care.

The AIDS pandemic caught the world in its most complacent decade when all seemed well on the surface and progressive improvement in health and prosperity appeared to be inevitable. With startling suddenness the HIV pandemic ripped this surface veneer exposing the ugly realities, shortcomings, weaknesses

and prejudices not only in the health system but in the entire social structure. The initial reaction was predictably panic, passionate protests and aggressive postures or depression and desperation.

But soon the challenge brought forth the best in mankind—the organization of a truly global systematic effort to define the problem and evolve and implement effective measures to alleviate the suffering and control the infection. Never before had so much been done in so short a time. Very high priority is accorded to research efforts directed at finding a drug to cure or a vaccine to prevent AIDS. If one is found soon, the social and ethical problems may vanish overnight and AIDS will become yet another remediable STD.

It is however, unlikely that during this decade there will be a vaccine or drug for the prevention or treatment of AIDS. Hence our efforts should be focused on prevention of HIV infection. Its spread can readily be prevented by mutually faithful monogamous sexual relationships. In persons who cannot follow this golden norm, the correct and consistent use of barrier methods - such as the condom could minimize the risk of HIV infection. Massive health education campaigns of the kind never before attempted in the health sector are underway, using all channels of communications to spread information about AIDS so that every individual can take steps to prevent the spread of HIV.

Women have a very special role to play in the containment and control of HIV epidemic. They have to protect themselves, their spouses and their children (born and unborn). They have to provide care and compassion to those who are already infected so that they spend their life in comfort and die with dignity. If the breadwinner of the family dies, they have to take on the additional role of the wage earner so that their family does not suffer economic deprivation. Last but not least, the majority of MCH care providers and health educationists in India are women: it is possible that they may succeed in providing appropriate counselling and care through interpersonal channels.

## Sexuality

MIRA SAVARA ...

ABOUT four years ago, an official for the Indian Council of Medical Research, New Delhi, spoke at the International AIDS conference in Montreal. He maintained that 'AIDS cannot, will not be a problem in India because we are a traditional society,' because we are unlike the decadent West, where the pill brought about a sexual revolution, with promiscuity and homosexuality.

Hardly five years later, and world authorities believe that India will probably be the epicentre for AIDS in Asia. Estimates about the number of HIV infected persons in India are many: ranging from 40,000 (in a WHO publication) to 0.5 million (accepted by the International Development Agency and many aid organizations) to 2.5 million (attributed to T. Jacob John of the Christian Medical College, Vellore, the first doctor to report of the presence of HIV in India). The estimate of the number of full blown AIDS cases was about 115 in March 1992.1 But it is commonly agreed that the official numbers of HIV infected are grossly under-reported because of our inadequate medical infrastruc-

These figures have caused serious concern, and a massive amount of money is pouring in for ADS-related work. Estimates keep changing, with the official government amount just for the state of Maharashtra, where the most ADS cases have been detected, often being quoted as over Rs. 300 crores. This does not include the aid given by private agencies to NGOs.

In this article I shall argue that much of the ADS-related educational

work currently being undertaken in India is irrelevant because there has been no attempt to understand and put sexuality into the Indian context. Prostitution, generally considered to be the hot-bed of infection. has been targetted for a massive onslaught. But since prostitutes are the wrong audience, the messages fail to make the desired impact. Moreover, the messages themselves are culturally irrelevant since Indian understanding of the causes of disease and health differ. I shall therefore attempt to put sexuality in a socio-historical context by examining the conditions under which the homosexual community developed in the US. The socio-economic scenario in India and the implications for sexuality will then be discussed.

It is widely believed that AIDS is caused by the HIV virus. Recently, however, a controversy has developed about this, with several top medical researchers, including Luc Montagnier who discovered HIV in 1983, and Peter Duesberg who first mapped the genetic structure of such viruses, believing that AIDs is not caused exclusively by HIV. They argue that the virus does not kill the cells of the immune system, but that the disease occurs when the immune system gets mis-programmed and begins to commit suicide in the presence of certain co-factors. Duesberg also maintains that AIDS is not infectious? and is the result of other factors that damage the immune system includrecreational drugs such as ing cocaine'.

The reason for mentioning this detail is that all current educational intervention programmes are based

<sup>1.</sup> Lal, Shiv, 'AIDS/HIV Infection in India—National Programme and Future Strategies/Policies', CARC Calling Vol. 5, No. 1, January-March 1992.

<sup>2.</sup> Bidwai, Praful, 'AIDS: Panic More Widespread than Hiv', Times of India, 11 May 1992.

on the fact that HIV causes AIDS. And HIV is transmitted through body fluids, one avenue being the exchange of sexual fluids. It is therefore important to keep in mind the ongoing controversy about the HIV-AIDS connection. There is, after all, a large, world-wide AIDS bureaucracy and a multi-million dollar industry which exists on the belief that HIV and AIDS are connected. Any research that could topple this belief might therefore be prevented from reaching the public.

From the Indian point of view, this new development is extremely interesting. Western medical understanding of the causes of disease has been based on the germ theory. Eastern and more holistic methods of understanding health have stressed that it is the basic balance and health of the body which determines whether a person succumbs to a disease. The new developments fit a holistic system far better. However, since this article concentrates on AIDs and sexuality, we will assume for now, that HIV causes AIDS. and that HIV is passed through an exchange of body fluids. Blood is one. But another, which is more relevant here, is sexual fluids. Chances of infection increase with multiple sex contacts, which occurs through affairs (unpaid sex), paid sex and homosexuality.

It has finally been accepted that there are no 'natural' sexualities; and that sexual behaviour is socially constructed; that the rates and forms of sexual expression vary across time and space, and that they differ for different classes and social groups. In each society and sub-culture, the social meanings of sex differ, as does its place in the life of men and women. In order to concretize this social construction of sexuality, we will examine the conditions under which the 'homosexual community' developed in the US.

AIDS literature often talks about two different patterns of transmission—that of the West, where it starts in the homosexual community, and then filters into the heterosexual. The other is the African (also applicable to India), which is primarily heterosexual. However, rather than viewing them as two differing modes

of transmission, it is possible to see them as being related to the differing historical and social conditions. In the West, societal changes were such that there emerged a sub-group and culture which could clearly be perceived as homosexual, making it possible to identify AIDs with a particular social group and thus be seen as the Gay Plague. Such conditions did not occur elsewhere. This is not to say that homosexual activity in-Asia and Africa did not exist, but that the social context and expression of such behaviour are different in these societies.

It was in the middle decades of the 20th century that a gay subculture took root in American cities. The war years pulled millions of American men and women from their families and small towns and deposited them in a variety of sex segregated, non-familial institutions. For men, it was the armed forces; for women it meant migrating to the cities and often lodging and working in virtually all-female environments. For a generation of young Americans, the war created a setting in which to experience same sex love, affection and sexuality.3 At the same time, the pill and birth control movement was breaking the connection of sex with reproduction. A new philosophy was emerging: sex was for pleasure.

The standard of living was also rising, together with the number and reach of consumer products. This allowed individuals to actually live a life dedicated to only pleasure. With growing consumerism, the advertising industry increasingly started to indulge in a not very subtle use of the erotic and sensual to sell their products. The entire society became sensualized, as it were, with lips, breasts, cleavages, and skin spilling out of every paper, magazine and Tv programme.

The changes set in motion by the war continued after demobilization. As male homosexuals and lesbians came to associate more freely, they created institutions to bolster their sense of identity. The sub-culture that evolved took a different shape

for men and women. With a long historical tradition of greater access to public space as well as gender socialization that encouraged sexual expression, gay men could meet more openly in bars, parks, bath houses. Boston, for example, had about 24 bars for gay men, as against one which served only women.

he expanding possibilities for gay men and lesbians to meet did not pass without a response. The post-war years bred fear about the ability of American institutions to withstand subversion from real and imagined enemies. Politicians first latched on to the issue of homosexuality in February 1950, the same month that Senator Joseph McCarthy initially charged that the Department of State was riddled with communists. A Congressional hearing was told that thousands of sexual deviants worked for government. In June 1950, a formal enquiry was commissioned. The ensuing reports charged that homosexuals lacked emotional stability, and that they have a corrosive influence on other employees. The cold war against communism made the problem of homosexuality even more threatening, with the charge that homosexuals could easily become spies because their deviance made them prime targets for blackmail.

There was a remarkable increase in the annual number of dismissals from government service, the number of discharges doubling with each passing year. One study in the mid-1950s estimated that over 12.6 million workers; i.e. more than 20% of the workforce, faced loyalty/security investigations as a condition of employment. This labelling encoura-ged local police forces to harass homosexuals by openly attacking them in parks, clubs and bath houses. New York, New Orleans, Miami, San Francisco, Baltimore and Dallas-all experienced police raids on bars and a large number of arrests.

On 27 June 1969, a group of police officers raided Stonewall Inn, a bar in the heart of Greenwich village. The act became cause for a riot. Thus began the 'Gay Power' movement, a social movement giving

<sup>3.</sup> D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America, Harper and Row, USA, 1988.

political visibility to the gay community. In time they were able to clip away some of the institutional structures, public policies and cultural attitudes that sustained a system of oppression. In the 1970s, half the states eliminated the sodomy statute from the penal code. In 1974. homosexuality was removed from the list of mental disorders. Several cities incorporated sexual preference into their municipal civil rights law. In Congress, the movement found sponsors for a federal civil rights law. Thus, though homosexuals have always existed in the US, for the first time they acquired political and social visibility as a rather powerful group.

Since AIDS is also a sexually transmitted disease, the chances of it being communicated in the homosexual community are as high as anywhere else. Easier in fact, since in the West it has been established that while male to female transmission occurs easily, female to male is rare, except if the male has genital lesions so that absorption of female sexual fluids is possible. Given the higher access of males to the medical system, and given the fact that it was possible to identify the sub-group, AIDS was initially associated with gay men's sex.

L his history was quite unique to America, and perhaps to other countries of Western Europe. It did not occur in India. However, a look at the trends in India indicates that there are changes taking place which point to growing sexual promiscuity, and hence a growing susceptibility to all STDs, including AIDS. Nevertheless, it is difficult to talk about sex in India, given the vast varieties of groups that the country encompasses. We still have groups practising polygamy and polyandry. There are still areas where matrilineal systems exist, and areas where adolescent girls and boys live together in hostels as part of their growing up process. There has been so little work done on sexuality that to draw a real picture of Indian sexuality, taking into account the many regional and sub-group differences, is

Based on our discussion of the growth of the homosexual community in the US, we can identify some parameters which affect the nature and types of sexual interactions and the social expression of sexuality. Some of these are: type of urbanization, women workers, changes in family structure, migration, the availability of birth control, the standard of living, and the type of consumerism and advertising.

he past few decades have seen a phenomenal growth in urbanization, the total urban population according to the 1991 Census reportedly being 217 million residing in 291 cities and towns all over India, 23 of which are million-plus cities. Urbanization has always been accompanied with a break-up of close extended family ties and with the growth of individualism in society. The nature of industrialization was also such that to a large extent, cities have had an excess of males. In 1931, for example, Bombay had 554 females for 1,000 men. This was because in the early stages of industrialization, it was common for men to migrate alone to the cities to work in factories, leaving the women and children behind in the rural areas to tend the small plots of land. This meant that the cities had a large number of single men without their families.

The most common living arrangement for those employed in the textile industry were all-male boarding houses. These provided a new opportunity for the expression of malemale sex, and for the growth in the number of prostitutes. Earlier, paid sex was usually associated with the other exclusively male setting, the armed forces. Now, millions of workers were potential customers. Prostitution in industrializing cities expanded. In Bombay, tens of thousands of prostitutes could be found in the infamous cages of Kamatipura.

Besides this internal Indian migration, there has been a phenomenal growth in the export of labour from India. Lakhs have migrated to the Gulf and returned with different experiences and rising aspirations, matched with a surplus income which they could not have imagined, let alone seen before. The number of women in the working force has also been showing an upswing, with a declining proportion of women working in household industry. In urban areas, the share of non-household industry increased from 12.9% to 14.3%. More and more women were leaving their homes for work, thus acquiring greater independence in their lives.

In addition, the tradition of the extended joint family has broken down, giving rise to a mushrooming of nuclear families. The pressures of industrialization and the erosion of traditional modes of living have also led to an increase in single women, and it is estimated that at least 20% of Indian households are headed by women. This again means that there are a large number of women who live independent lives, with little male supervision.

Indian women have never had to fight for birth control. It has been literally thrust upon us from every nook and corner. The government advertizes condoms, abortions, sterilizations, pills. Even though there is resistance to the forced nature of the family planning programmes, the overall effect is the awareness that it is now possible to separate sex from reproduction. One reason why women prefer to get sterilized themselves is that if the men do so, and the women become pregnant, it could lead to problems. This gives us some idea of what is actually happening.

All this has been taking place at a time when there has been a rise in the living standards of a large section of the people. With the help of unions, industrial workers, once part of the oppressed poor, now earn comparatively more, so that they have risen to join the ranks of the middle class. The level of income earned by the middle class has also been rising, as have the numbers of the nouveau riche. With this have come a growing number of consumer durables being manufactured by a large number of competing

difficult. However, we can discuss how the changing socio-economic conditions are related to sexuality and hence make some predictions regarding possible trends.

<sup>4.</sup> Savara, Mira, Changing Trends in Women's Employment—A Case Study of the Textile Industry in Bombay, Himalaya Publishing Co., Bombay, 1988.

industrial groups: fridges, TVs, music systems, mixers, air conditioners, ovens, microwaves, convenience foods, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, motor cycles, mopeds, cars. Once the exclusive preserve of the rich, these are now middle class household gadgets.

And all these durables are accompanied by advertising. Erotic images, as in the West, have become an everyday affair. Be it the Kamasutra ad for condoms or MRF tyres, showing the male body almost to perfection, or be it the sensuousness of Garden Vareili or the soft lips of Lakme, pretty girls are used to sell just about anything, from tractors to computers. All these factors point to a situation where there is a growing tendency towards freer social relationships outside of immediate family, village or caste control. With the increasing independence of women, one would expect a larger number of affairs contracted, not on the basis of force or money, but for mutual satisfaction. Prostitution would possibly grow-in new areas, and specially in large towns where the first generation of villagers are leaving the confines of tradition. We could also expect a more open form of homosexuality.

here are some indications affirming the growth of a more open form of sexuality. The number of cases coming to the government structures, which only records the tip of the iceberg, is increasing: from 479,000 in 1978-79 to 919,000 in 1984-85. The number of abortions done in government clinics has also risen from 317,000 in 1978-79 to 573,000 in 1984-85. Last year, Bombay Dost, the first magazine devoted exclusively to those practising an alternative sexuality, was launched.

Studies on sexual behaviour patterns would give us an idea of these changing trends. Unfortunately, in India, there has been no study of actual behaviour patterns, of what people actually do, as opposed to what people think people should be doing. It has long been assumed that virginity and monogamy were the

general rule. Deviant forms, like hijras, existed, but they were on the fringes—little noticed, of little concern.

Recently, however, a magazine conducted a small survey on the actual behaviour patterns of urban, educated men. The sample consisted of 1500 men, and the results broke several myths about the nature of Indian sexual behaviour. Over four-fifths of the men had had sexual intercourse, 41% of them before they had reached the age of 20. Only 22% had their first sexual experience with their wives; 29% had it with a friend, 21% with a paid person. 13% had their first experience with a relative, while for 10%, it was with a person of the same sex.

Among married men, 55% claimed to have had extra-marital affairs with a non-paid person of the opposite sex. 25% of these affairs took place with relatives, 18% occurred in the workplace, and 53% with friends. Thirty-seven per cent (414 men) claimed to have had homosexual experience. It was usually at a young age, 80% having had it before they were 20. 220 of these men were married, and a third of them said their wives knew about their homosexual activities. A fifth of the men said they had had over 10 persons. The main reasons given by respondents (30%) who claimed to have gone in for paid sex were because they felt like it, and because they were on tour. Of them, 43% had been to 1 to 5 women, 23% to over 10. Only 19% of this highly educated group used a condom on such occasions. Anal intercourse, considered by many to be the act of homosexuals, is not so. Among the married men, 20% said that they had had anal intercourse with their

This is a small sample, based on a self-administered questionnaire published in an English magazine. It points to the urgent necessity of carrying out more extended research on sexual behaviour patterns. However, this small survey indicates that there is much sexual activity going on

outside marriage, which is not confined to prostitutes or paid sex.

The current emphasis of AIDS education work has been on the prostititutes, with free and subsidized condoms being distributed and their being 'motivated' to educate their customers to use them. Here, it is crucial to understand the basis on which the exchange between prostitute and client occurs, and to what extent she is capable of negotiating the terms of that exchange. This determines whether she has any bargaining power over the usage of the condom. In India, supply far out-strips demand, and in many cases women are totally dependent on only sexual exchange to make their livelihood. In such a situation, it is unlikely that she would insist on condom usage.

Increased bargaining power is a precondition for the prostitute to be able to negotiate the terms of her contract. In the absence of this, all propaganda, like free condoms, get thrown in the garbage. Not eating today is far more real than the possibility of getting a disease from an act which she has been performing for years, without too serious a problem. For an AIDS intervention to make sense, it needs to be linked with empowerment, which can only occur if other means of making an income exist. AIDS education for prostitutes has to be linked with income generation.

But prostitutes, as a distinct group, are not the only ones concerned with sex. As the survey indicates, a relatively high number of affairs are with relatives and with co-workers. In the absence of data, it is difficult to conclude that these are totally voluntary. Since there is an unequal social relation, it is possible that women in such a situation have little control over the conditions of sexual exchange. The focus on usage of condoms with prostitutes denies the need for clients to use condoms in their other sexual encounters.

As the above statistics show, the extent and nature of sexual contacts is far wider and the range encompassed similar to the other social contacts a person is likely to have. Hence, the emphasis on educating

<sup>5.</sup> Department of Social Welfare, Handbook of Social Welfare Statistics, Government of India, 1986.

<sup>6.</sup> Savara, Mira and C.R Sridhar, 'Sexual Behaviour of Urban, Educated Indian Men: Results of a Survey', *Journal of Family Welfare*, Bombay, April 1992.

prostitutes about AIDS creates the illusion that, it is a disease which is primarily transmitted by this group.

Little of the educational work addresses itself to homosexuals. This is because at some level there is denial that homosexuality exists here, particularly since its social expression differs from that in the West. In India, homosexuality is not perceived as providing an exclusive social identity. However, the survey mentioned earlier does indicate the prevalence of such behaviour, although most men do not engage exclusively in male-male sex. Hence the social matrix of the possibilities of AIDS transmission in India differs substantially from the West. And it is evident that if the current focus on prostitutes continues, it will fail to contain the infection.

There have been some attempts to educate the public through ads and TV. The lesson most often given is that AIDs is a killer disease. The picture of a skull with AIDS written over it has become commonplace. It carries the message that sex could equal death, a message which would probably jibe well with the West, given its Christian sub-culture that sex equals sin. However, the usual understanding is that the Indian conception of sex is quite different. Our myths talk of creation as a joyous act of intercourse: our gods are always male and female together; control of sexual energy can be a means of spiritual enlightenment in Tantra: the erotic sculptures, or what remains of them after all the invasions and breaking of temples, are one indication.

In the West, there has been a growing separation of sex from other kinds of relationships. The advice contained in sex manuals seems to be directed towards machines, to be touched here, tickled there. Compare it to the Kamasutra, which laid down complicated ethics of behaviour and gave hints on how to approach others' wives and courtesans. Romancing, and the art of seduction, of pleasing the other, is what is important. Sensuousness. Not this obsessional preoccupation with the orgasm. It is a more total experience, entwined into the texture of life, with smell, taste and feeling.

The current educational campaigns on AIDS treats sex in the abstract manner of the West. 'If you go with another woman....you could get AIDS.' The ads for Kamasutra condoms show a much better understanding of the Indian feeling for sexuality, including it as part of the skill in making love. The view of sex as dehumanized and impersonal, as something which could cause death is currently being supported by a multi-dollar campaign funded primarily by the West. Local NGOs working on AIDS have been drawing attention to the West's ideological control of the way we approach our problems. For example, already the World Bank has stipulated that the AIDS project must be run by an independent body, outside government control and with free access to who, which will monitor and evaluate the project.

Local NGOs also allege that the national AIDs project is being hijacked by foreigners and India could soon become a playground for foreign AIDs researchers, just as Africa was in the 1980s. This is a real possibility, given the fact that the international AIDs programme has reached the stage where they want to test possible cures.

A he current AIDS campaign is based on an understanding of sex, individuals and society which has essentially come from the West. Sex is referred to entirely in the abstract. as an act which exists apart from the individuals concerned: a medicotechnological impersonal act, to which we have to apply our scientific, men as object, gaze The purpose of this article has been to indicate that sexuality is a social construct, and that its construction in India differs from that of the West. Our current educational campaigns are based on a lack of information, or information that we are incorrectly transposing from the West. And this has serious implications. Finally, it is only with an open recognition of the need to understand sexuality and disease within our own culture that any adequate and effective educational campaign can be developed.

<sup>7. &#</sup>x27;IBRD Funding of AIDS Project Flayed', Economic Times, 8 April 1992.

### Hapless victims

S. SUNDARARAMAN, SURESH PURUSHOTHAMAN and A.K. GANESH

THE Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) first made its official appearance in India in Madras in 1986. The first few cases of HIV infection were reported amongst women engaged in prostitution (prostitutes are hereinafter referred to as the CSWs or commercial sex workers). Not surprisingly, a great deal of frenzy was whipped up in the media and the popular feeling was that if you do away with these women, you've killed the problem.

This is not being realistic even if prostitution provides an imminent threat of transmitting the virus. A whole gamut of issues need to be looked into for us to develop a more understanding and mature outlook towards those segments of societies which are sought to be marginalized further as a result of this epidemic, and overall, towards the very import

of HIV and AIDS in our society. This article attempts to explore a few of these. It should be noted, however, that the scope of the article confines itself to the women operating in the lower socio-economic category and does not apply to those operating in higher economic levels.

The CSWs are predominantly from the economically weaker sections and operate from diverse locales like rail/bus stations, cinema theatres, other public places and highways. Their lower levels of income per sexual encounter necessitates them to have the maximum number of clients possible within the day. The high number of sexual contacts increases their risk of contracting HIV from an infected partner. Consequently, this large client turnover, intrinsic to sex work, also magnifies the risk of infection from

HIV through clients who are already HIV infected.

CSWs though, are not the only dimension to the whole problem. The clients of these sex workers, who belong to all sections of society, have a greater chance of transmitting the virus across the general community. The social and cultural factors that govern our societies respond in a manner that is at variance with this reality. Marginalization of the sex workers under the premise that they are the real and only vectors of transmission is taking place, and the chances of orchestrating detection to fix the blame on them therefore become higher, all the while clients being the unseen partners of my transmission.

The problem of HIV and the vulnerability of the commercial sex workers to its transmission is further compounded by several factors that have hindered the prospects of their being able to lead a healthy and full life.

A majority of the sex workers are illiterate. This renders preventive education campaigns in the media hard to reach this community. Outreach based, community level intervention strategies are the only viable and credible option.

Because of the high turnover of clients they have to ensure to meet their economic needs, and because of the fact that both medical treatment and the time spent on it constrains their earning a great deal, CSWs accord health the lowest priority. Their genital hygiene being poor, they are subject to repeated vaginal trauma. As is the case in even the general population, any occurrence of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) is often neglected and left untreated. Since the danger of HIV transmission is much higher in the event of an STD, the sex workers are at greater exposure to the virus

Protective devices i.e. condoms are rarely used within the ambit of commercial sex. Many workers hardly possess the knowledge nor do they have access to the information that use of condoms minimizes risk of transmission. Granting that HIV/AIDS prevention and education cam-

paigns do offer a credible and correct source of information to the sex workers, what are the factors that deter assimilation of this information and subsequent shift to protective sexual behaviour based on this knowledge?

raditionally, since the manwoman relationship in our country has always been loaded in favour of the male, women are often always left without any decision-making powers. Both within the confines of a family, a marital relationship or outside of it, men have always had their say in all matters. This sociocultural factor extends itself to commercial sex work as well.

Women sex workers, faced as they are with competition and economic pressures, are left with very few options to enforce or ensure condom use. This feeling of absolute power-lessness negates any positive effect that HIV/AIDS education or knowledge aimed at the commercial sex workers would otherwise have.

Clearly, the pattern of HIV transmission across the country is heterosexual, multi-partner sex. The taboo that clouds and inhibits open discussion of sex and sexuality in India constricts any reasonable knowledge of the magnitude of sexual interaction that takes place outside of commercial sex. It, therefore, becomes all the more easier to fix the blame for spreading HIV on the CSWs, which is grossly unfair.

Moreover, in view of the lack of any policy framework for the testing and surveillance of HIV, forcible testing of the CSWs and thus coercive detection of infection among these women leads to a more greater distancing of the problem. The popular perception that the sex workers are responsible for infecting others, ignoring the fact that clients infected them in the first place, has led to all strategies centering around this community. Reality demands otherwise.

Like the rest of the world, the Indian government also initially adopted a cavalier attitude towards, HIV/AIDS. The epidemic was sought to be controlled by merely marginalizing and isolating the commercial

sex workers. With each passing day, with more and more cases of infection being reported from amongst the general population, the centre awoke to the haunting reality that here was something that necessitated more than disease control measures.

Yet, precious little has been done apart from drawing up elaborate plans and strategies. The time lost in the implementation of these, however myopic they may be, is proving to be costly. Information and education campaigns focusing on prevention have still not been taken up by the government. AIDS, however, is high on the priority list, even found to be deserving the formulation of a medium-term plan.

Few state governments, notably, Maharashtra, Manipur and Tamilnadu, have initiated any action These states are then considered to be epicentres of mv infection in India. The thrust of these strategies is predominantly on minimizing miv spread, with not much being done about STD prevention which could hold one of the keys to the successful combatting of the epidemic.

India boasts of an extensive network of non-government, community-based organizations that are dedicated to serving society on social, economic and health/medical fronts. NGOs working exclusively on AIDS have been few and far. However, many other grassroot organizations have now started to concentrate their energies on HIV prevention.

The major stumbling block for-NGOs working on AIDS seems to be the acute sensitivity attached to discussing issues relating to sex. Many of the NGOs themselves are not comfortable while talking about these issues and STDs, as also in working with or among the CSWs. Ouite a few have adopted retrograde, regressive policies with a reformist stance aimed at the abolition of the practice of prostitution. The ground reality that it will take a social and economic revolution to end this profession, which is unforeseeable even in the long-term future, has escaped these NGOs and they work at cross-purposes to the whole effort.

However, there have been a few interventions aimed at sex workers that have adopted a more humane. non-judgemental approach to the whole issue of prostitution and HIV/ AIDS. Notable among them are the Indian Health Organization; Population Services International; and the Bombay Municipal Corporation, all of whom work in the red light district of Kamatipura in Bombay. As is apparent, much of the focus and effort has been concentrated in one geographic area i.e. Bombay, where a modest measure of success has been documented.

The need of the hour is therefore to look at successful projects and adopt these to suit the socio-cultural needs of particular geographic areas, and quickly and efficiently replicate successful projects/programmes addressing std/hiv transmission throughout the country.

As discussed earlier, a shift in focus from interventions aimed toward the commercial sex workers to the clients, is imperative. During the course of a one-year pilot project conducted among the commercial sex workers by the AIDS Research Foundation of India in Madras, several observations were made, which have been discussed earlier: absolute lack of information/knowledge on HIV/AIDS due to illiteracy, lack of negotiating skills and power to enforce/ensure condom use etcetera among the CSWs.

It was then decided that it was futile to aim all interventions at the CSWs alone, without creating an environment that is conducive to the adoption of prevention mechanisms while selling sex. More gains would follow by shifting the focus of interventions to the clients of these sex workers. Since the presence of STDs is a fairly good parameter of the vulnerability to HIV infection, a study was done at three sto clinics in Madras city which revealed distinct profiles of people reporting infections. Correlated with the information culled from the CSWs about client patterns, these were seen essentially as people who were migrant or living outside of their home towns/villages. Few of the client profiles were of long-distance truck drivers and other transport drivers, blue collar industrial workers, construction workers, port employees etcetera.

The clients came from diverse segments of society and as such, exhibited diverse socio-cultural behaviour that was peculiar to their individual communities. For example, it was found that the long-distance truck drivers were familiar with condoms on a day-to-day level, though for a different purpose: they used it to plug radiator leaks. Their constant sex seeking was born out of a felt notion that they had to dispel the heat assimilated in their body, due to being exposed to the engine heat during their long journeys. This notion was passed down among their community by generations of truckers.

It was also observed that the construction workers took to commercial sex seeking due to the fact that they were mostly migrants living away from their families, and that the port employees patronized CSWs mostly on Fridays, their weekly pay day. Such factors need to be carefully analyzed and used to develop and implement interventions that are appropriate to the different segments of the people involved.

In the light of the current projections of HIV infection that portray a very grim picture for the coming years, HIV control programmes have to immediately assume a much more broad-based canvas that ensures that prevention messages reach everybody and consented safe sexual practices become the norm of the day. The immediate need for integrating SID prevention with the HIV prevention programme should also be addressed.

The CSWs do require particular attention due to their specific vulnerability to the infection. But, before interventions repeatedly target these people, an atmosphere that is conducive to their negotiating and selling safe sex must be fostered. It is for this reason that the focus now needs to be shifted towards the clients and that a positive change from unsafe sexual behaviour to safe sexual behaviour that promotes a bi-directional process is brought about within them.

### Promoting condoms

K. GOPALAKRISHNAN

WITH the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) identifying the heterosexual route as responsible for 75% of transmission of the AIDS virus, condoms and communication have come to assume a role of vital significance in preventing the rapid spread of infection. In India, condoms are nothing new: they have been available for over 40 years. The Government of India, which runs the largest social marketing programme in the world, has been distributing condoms since 1968 through its health system and with the help of established consumer goods companies and voluntary organizations.

A large portion of the government's distribution is free. Ranging from health workers visiting rural households to government employees getting them with their pay packets, a wide variety of channels are used by the government to distribute close to 700 million condoms each year. The government itself recognizes, however, that close to 50% of the condoms involved in the Rs. 35 crore free distribution scheme are perhaps

wasted; and efforts are presently on to improve monitoring and to tighten up logistics. This becomes very critical given the government's decision to replace the unlubricated condoms—reckoned worldwide to be more difficult to use, and specifically rated as unsuitable by the World Health Organization (WHO) to prevent AIDS transmission—with lubricated condoms.

The social marketing programme of the government has traditionally relied on companies of the calibre of rrc Limited, Hindustan Lever, Brooke Bond, Tata Oil Mills Co. and, of late, on voluntary organizations like Population Services International (PSI) and Parivar Seva Sanstha (PSS) to help in the marketing of subsidized condoms.

Most of these companies are given specific geographical territories to market the Nirodh range of condoms or work under the 'multi-brand strategy' of the government, where the product is supplied at a low price by the government and the organiza-

tion is given the freedom to identify a brand name and market the condom at a price which is below that of a comparable commercial brand. 'Masti' of PSI and 'Sawan' and 'Bliss' of PSS are brands specially created for the programme. Last year, the government sold about 260 million pieces under this programme. (PSI is the only organization which markets both Nirodh and its own brand.)

The two other major sources of condoms are the private sector companies accounting for about 80 million pieces a year and condoms imported into India under an Open General Licence (ogl.) totalling about 40 million. Though the London Rubber Company, part of the Madras-based TTK Group, had a virtual monopoly among commercial brands till two years ago, the Adam range introduced by Polar Latex and the Kama Sutra range introduced by J. K. Chemicals have brought more aggressive players into the market arena.

The Indian condom programme has so far been geared towards tackling the other crucial issue that has been worrying our planners i.e. family planning. Even after so many decades of effort, condoms protect only about 5% of couples in the reproductive age groups. This is far less than what even countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan, who started their condom programme years after India did, have achieved.

Grave doubts are also expressed in many quarters about the quality of Indian condoms and the ability of Indian manufacturers to be able to meet the demand, if there is a sudden surge owing to the spread of the AIDS virus. While it is true that so far not enough attention has been paid to the quality control aspect, mainly because Indian condoms were perceived to be good enough for family planning, the time has come —as the government itself recognizes -to reappraise the condom production procedure and to make sure that Indian condoms meet specifications given by WHO.

Experts feel that it will be possible to upgrade the facilities with existing know-how, but that it will take

even the best private company about two years and the cost per piece will increase by at least 40%. It is worth noting that while the Schedule of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act under which condoms are manufactured in India was made less stringent a few years ago, the time is fast approaching when, in order to meet international standards, the government will be forced to revise the Schedule to levels which may be considered draconian by present norms.

But what should actually worry planners is the quality of foil used for packing the condoms and the machines that are used to seal the foil. Latest research data released by Family Health International indicate that use of lubricants like vaseline, cream and petroleum jelly, that are not soluble in water, is the primary reason for the condoms bursting. Given the abysmal standard of Indian foil, packing will have to be improved to keep the lubricant inside the condom and ensure that users are not tempted to use other damaging lubricants.

On the other count of being able to meet a possible spurt in demand, there seems to be, for the right reasons, no major cause for concern. The country has, between the public and private sectors, about 1,600 million pieces of installed capacity and more private manufacturing facilities are in the pipeline. It also seems likely that the family planning side of the condom programme will continue to dominate with the condoms related to AIDS prevention—if we can ever figure out a way of knowing how such a calculation can be made—gradually increasing their share.

It is in this overall setting that condom promotion and communication will have to be viewed. There is no escape from the fact that at least in the initial stages, the AIDS component will ride piggyback on the family planning effort. Overall, there is bound to be a two-pronged strategy: (a) to strengthen existing communication and distribution to make condoms more acceptable and more easily available; and (b) to start special programmes targetted at particular vulnerable groups—prostitutes, their customers, migrant

labour, truck drivers etcetera—to ensure that during high risk behaviour they know why condoms should be used and that lubricated condoms are easily available.

The first is perhaps an easier exercise once the government sets straight the distribution channels that are a little askew: the northern, southern, and some of the eastern states, served mainly by ITC, PSI and TOMCO, have strong distribution channels but the eastern and western states, catered for by Hindustan Lever and Brooke Bond respectively, have had a dismal record. These two companies between them serve a population of over 250 million (about 30% of the 1991 population). A study needs to be undertaken to determine the difficulties faced by these companies so as to increase their sales for the programme and to devise innovative ways to reach high risk behaviour areas.

To address the second part of the strategy, the extents of which are defined only by human creativity and ingenuity, there can be no set formula that can be offered. The ground realities, for instance, are varied: there is a distinct red light district in Bombay, one of the three 'epicentres' of the virus where a majority of the city's 100,000 prostitues live, but there is no such area in Madras, another epicentre. Delhi has about 3,000 prostitutes on Swami Shradhanand Marg, better known as G. B. Road, and the rest of the prostitution is almost subterranean, spread across the city.

As there are only a handful of organizations which have got action programmes among such groups, we outline here lessons being learnt from our own project in Kamatipura and Falkland Road, the main red light area of Bombay. The Government of India's Family Welfare Training and Research Centre located on the periphery of the project area, is the collaborating agency.

An Indian voluntary organization, PSI is registered as a non-profit society. Apart from assisting government with the marketing of Nirodh and Masti, it also markets 'Pearl', its own brand of oral contraceptive pill for women under the govern-

ment's Contraceptive Social Marketing Project. PSI's work in AIDS is a logical extension of its condom marketing and communication expertize.

It was evident to us that focusing only on the prostitutes' community, though easier to manage, would be counter-productive. The prostitutes have always been a highly vulnerable community suffering at the hands of vested interests, ranging from the local government machinery and the police, to mafia groups deeply entrenched in their exploitation. Also, the decision to use the condom is hardly that of these women as it is the customer who controls the purse-strings and on whose whims the livelihood of these hapless women hinges. The strategy, therefore, was to adopt an integrated approach to encourage safe sex practices and this was broken down into four components: person-to-person communication with prostitutes through specially recruited and trained communicators; a doctor available to the community at their doorstep for health referral; communication with customers; and condom distribution/promotion.

Seven women, chosen to suit the psychographic profile of prostitutes, visit 5,000 prostitutes every fortnight and talk to them on all aspects of health, with special focus on sexually transmitted diseases and AIDs. In view of the delicate nature of the subject, our initial attempt was to recruit prostitutes with functional literacy as communicators. However, one of them who wanted to join did not turn up after accepting the appointment letter and a second, who turned out to be a powerful communicator, disappeared after about 20 days of work, sold by her madam to a brothel in another city,.

All Inter-personal Communicators (IPCs), as these women are officially designated, are trained extensively and updated regularly on all aspects of health and are armed with a translated version of David Werner's Where there is no doctor, the bible of the barefoot doctor in India. All minor ailments—and they are legion among the prostitutes—are handled by the IPCs so that only the more serious ones get the attention of the doctor. Each IPC calls on 60 prostitutes every day to discuss pre-select-

ed topics and each day's work is meticulously recorded and scrutinized by the project management. The IPCs also sell condoms to these women, encouraging them to sell them to customers at a higher price—exactly as a shopkeeper does with a customer—to build in a financial interest in the distribution and use of condoms.

L he doctor is a credibility link the project has attempted to establish with prostitutes. It is not easy to get doctors to work in these areas, less so a lady doctor, particularly a lady doctor who visits brothels. The doctor serves as a back-up to the IPCs, maintaining a daily beat of visits and paying special attention to women referred by IPCs. Whatever she can handle she treats by prescribing medicines which the women can buy from local chemists. If any case requires clinical intervention, the doctorrefers them to hospitals and clinics with whom she has established tieups.

The customer is the most difficult to reach because he merges with the crowd and is difficult to identify. But extensive market research done by UNICEF in 1989 through a professional organization in its srp control programme, offers definite pointers. The consumer almost never comes alone. Buying sex is just a part of his evening entertainment in which he packs in other activities: he visits a bar for drinks, he eats non-vegetarian food at a restaurant, he goes to the cinema and he also goes on a reconnaissance mission before he decides on a brothel. These, therefore, become automatic points of contacts for his education.

A one-minute advertisement film, specially made for the project, is screened in local cinema halls. This constitutes the only use of mass media in the project. Other communication includes, besides the obvious posters, stickers, leaflets and hoardings:

(a) A four-hour 'record dance show' every evening where a full troupe of six artists on a 10×15 feet stage equipped with professional lights and sound system stage a live entertainment-cum-education show.

- (b) Use of special software in bars and restaurants where televisions and VCRs are used to provide entertainment and to educate customers on routes of AIDS virus transmission and the proper way to use condoms. (The extent of ignorance about condom use is indeed surprising. Condoms are commonly put on with their sides reversed, often resulting in them getting stuck in the middle of the penis and, with the exertion, bursting.)
- (c) A magician-cum-acrobat giving street-level talk shows on AIDS transmission combined with entertainment.

A salesman distributes PSI's Masti condoms among 400 outlets in the area and also makes them available in as many bars, restaurants, STD clinics, brothels and barber shops as are willing to stock them. It is interesting to note that the most popular condoms in the area are imported and are packed in attractive cartons that feature nude or semi-nude women. Condoms are also sold in individual pieces, like cigarettes are sold in urban areas, and irrespective of brands are priced at Rs. 2 each.

The entire communication campaign was thoroughly researched by a professional market research organization so as to fine-tune it to suit the needs of the community as closely as possible. This market research also established a baseline for the project, enabling us to measure its impact after about a year.

To support IPC's effort with prostitutes, some special innovative programmes have been initiated which include audio cassettes that offer a mixture of film industry gossip and popular film songs interspersed with AIDS messages, and direct communication with groups of between 500 and 1500 prostitutes in cinema halls hired for the duration of a show in which popular Hindi blockbusters donated by the film industry are screened. The show is interrupted after about an hour so as to communicate with the women in a sympathetic atmosphere about the dangers of the AIDS virus and the precautions they and their customers should take.

## Drug abuse

GABRIEL BRITTO

THE pursuit of pleasure is, and always has been, of paramount importance to most human beings. Anything which heightens the sensation of pleasure is equally important—especially for those seeking escape from the humdrum reality of their existence—from depression, poverty, frustration and boredom. This pursuit of pleasure invariably leads to the committing of excesses which, in turn, lead to social problems and the world today seems to be fighting a losing battle against the horror of AIDS.

Alcohol and drugs are two substances which have been used and abused over the centuries by man. Though the abuse of alcohol is a great social evil, it is, in fact, not directly responsible for the spread of AIDS. Drugs, on the other hand, especially when intravenously injected, are, apart from sexual contact with an infected person, almost the most potent factor in the spread of AIDS today. Let us take a look at some commonly abused drugs and see how they are consumed.

Drugs such as pethidine, morphine, fortwin and buprenorphine are injected into the muscle. Heroin in its pure form, i.e. white heroin, is also taken intravenously. In a few cases brown sugar, the crude form of heroin, is also injected. In this paper, persons who take drugs with the aid of needle and syringe are termed injecting drug users (HDUs). It is this use of needle and syringe, and the sharing of them between drug users, which constitutes high risk behaviour in the spread of AIDS. Generally, HIV spreads when blood, semen or the vaginal secretion of an infected person comes in contact with the blood or mucous membranes of a healthy person. Experimental or casual users of drugs areat a high risk of getting infected as they invariably share equipment during their first few 'fixes'. This is very common in the north-eastern region of India, where needles and syringes are not easily available. Here, addicts use eye-droppers and share needles and syringes. Regular, long-term users are, relatively speaking, at lower risk as they normally use their own equipment.

It has been reported that morphine, pethidine, fortwin and, recently, buprenorphine, medically prescribed for the management of pain, have been abused by doctors and nurses for non-medical purposes. However, this would not be a route to AIDS among them as the medical fraternity, quite apart from knowing how to administer the drugs, know the importance of cleaning syringes and would not normally share unsterilized needles.

D. Mohan et ak (1978) found that the use of heroin, morphine and pethidine was non-existent in rural Punjab. They also found that among males, the most commonly abused opiate was alcohol (58.5%), followed by tobacco (19.3%) and opium (6.3%). Tobacco and alcohol are two major sources of revenue for the government and are actively promoted by companies that process or produce them. But though the use of alcohol and tobacco products is not actively linked to Ams, it is interesting to note that addicts using other substances also use alcohol. In a study of 1282 addicts, there were 708 who took alcohol in addition to other drugs (Britto et al. 1987).

Another opiate, the ganja plant, grows wild in large parts of the country. Both ganja and charas are extensively used in almost all parts of India. It is popularly called the poor man's liquor since with about a rupee or two, one can attain a high, eat and sleep peacefully. The consumption of bhang, charas and even opium has had social sanction for centuries in this country. A good number of agricultural labourers, rickshaw pullers, porters, truck drivers and others involved in hard physical labour almost all over the country use them regularly to relieve weariness at the end of the day.

While ganja and charas are normally mixed with tobacco and smoked through a chillum or hookah, bhang is mixed with milk or sweets and consumed mainly on festive occasions such as Holi. In Orissa, this practice is part and parcel of the people's culture, especially in Puri district. While the deep inhalation practice among ganja users creates respiratory problems, there has been no known case of ganja or charas being injected. Thus the vast number of ganja/charas/bhang users are not really vulnerable to AIDS.

Opium is widely used in Kashmır, Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Har-yana and Himachal Pradesh. In Punjab and Rajasthan, opium is either eaten or mixed with waterand drunk. In his study, Bhairon Singh concluded that there were 38,000 opium drinkers in advanced stages of addiction in Jodhpur district alone. In western Rajasthan, opium liquid serves the same purpose that liquor does in Western civilizations; it is served on marriages, deaths, births and at all social events. In other parts of the country, opium is usually smoked through a pipe.

In traditional systems of medicine and home remedies, opium was given in small grains to infants and children during their teething period. This practice, recorded in the Gazetteers of the British, has also been noted in recent studies conducted in Pakistan. In some of the tribal areas and among quarry workers, women reportedly give opium to their children to make them sleep while they are at work. In Rajasthan, in 1989, 24 children were admitted to a single hospital in Jodhpur, on account of opium overdose (Britto 1990). There is also some evidence that mothers applied opium to their breast to kill female children in the last century. Opium has also been used for controlling diarrhoea and diabetes. In Hoogly district of West Bengal, opium was used to prevent recurrent relapses of fever after malaria attacks. However, the intravenous use of opium as such is not at all prevalent in any part of the country. Thus the vast majority of addicts using opium are also not at risk for AIDS.

As already mentioned, brown sugar is a crude form of heroin, itself a derivative of opium. But it is more addictive than opium. In the case of brown sugar/heroin users, there is a graduation in the mode of intake: they may begin by mixing it with tobacco, move to inhalation of the vapour (chasing), then resort to injections. However, this pattern is not uniform or necessarily sequential. In most parts of the country, the predominant style of taking brown sugar is by inhaling the fumes, popularly called 'chasing'. In 1984, Adityanjee and others reported smoking as the favourite mode of intake for brown sugar in Delhi. But within two years, Avadesh Sharma found that out of his 160 respondents. none were smoking brown sugar, three were injecting it, while the rest were all chasing.

In Bombay, only four among the 240 brown sugar addicts studied, took it by injection. In Pune, the intravenous use of brown sugar was reported in three out of 65 brown sugar addicts (Britto et al. 1988). In 1989, Katy Gandevia interviewed 324 addicts in Bombay, of whom only nine injected brown sugar. A study conducted by Mirchandani and Amin in 1992 revealed that among 460 addicts seeking treatment, there were three addicts who mixed brown sugar with lime juice and injected the solution into their veins. All the rest were chasing. In Goa, the NARC research team found that six out of 106 brown sugar addicts injected the drug. On the other hand, D.R. Singh who studied 74 patients in Goa in 1990, found four brown sugar users who injected the stuff. Based on these findings, we may suggest that the real danger of AIDS spreading among college students through intravenous drug use is very limited in most parts of the country, the only major exception being the north-eastern region of India.

The real danger of intravenous addiction, however, comes from the medical fraternity. While treating drug abusers, certain 'medicinal' drugs are used to taper their dependence. One such 'medicine' is buprenorphine, which is sold under various brand names such as Tidigesic. Many doctors are not aware of

its addictive potential. On account of poor training and ignorance, some medical practitioners have used it for treating addicts and have discharged them before they were gradually withdrawn from the medication. Thus a good number of drug abusers have become addicted to this medicine. This has happened in Orissa, Tamilnadu, Kerala and Bangalore. Many addicts who seek discharge against medical advice and leave the treatment mid-way are then likely to become dependent on medicines. M. Suresh Kumar has reported that in Madras, slum-dwellers have started abusing this medicine as its cost is comparatively low. When cash is low or when it is difficult to obtain brown sugar, addicts resort to cheap liquor or to Tidigesic.

AIDS threatens to wipe out a major portion of the population in Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya, the reason being the widespread practice of injecting heroin. Management of drug use in this region is therefore essential to curtail the spread of AIDS. The situation here calls for major policy and attitudinal changes. The chances of transmitting HIV infection through needles, blood and blood products is 90% while that for heterosexual transmission is .01 to 1%.

According to a study conducted. by the Indian Medical Association in Manipur, 1,30,000 persons were addicted to alcohol, 13,000 to ganja, 10,000 to heroin, 4500 to phensidyl, 1650 to tablets such as calmpose, mandrax, and other mood relievers, 600 to opium and 150 to morphine. The districts where HIV cases were identified are Imphal, Churchandapur, Chandel, Thoubal, Ukhrul, Bishenpur and Senapati. Since no volunteers came forward for testing from Tamenglong, the number of HIV cases in this district could not be determined.

It is most appropriate then that the UNDP, the Overseas Development Agency, the European Commission and other agencies are sending a body of international experts to develop an action plan for controlling drug-related AIDS in North-East India. That they are planning to invest US \$ 20 million is good news so long as the ground

realities of these fragmented societies are taken into account.

The Regional Medical College, Imphal provides the following statistics on HIV in the state (up to January 1992):

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| Total testing HIV positive   | . 3841<br>1135 |
|--|----------------|
| <del></del>  |                |
| A. Intravenous Drug<br>Users (IDUs)  |                |
| IDUs tested for HIV<br>HIV positive IDUs<br>Percentage of IDUs<br>testing positive | 2455<br>1033   |
| , for HIV  | 43.7%          |
| B. Blood donors  | •              |

| Total | Total donors tested                     |      | 979 |
|-------|---|------|-----|
|       | HIV positive blood                      |      | 20  |
|       | donors                                  |      | 28  |
|       | Percentage of blood donors tested posi- | -    |     |
|       | tive for HIV                            | 2.9% |     |
|       |   |      |     |

## C. Others Total tested for HIV 2407 Total tested positive for HIV 34

1.4%

Percentage of HIV

positives

This is in sharp contrast to the overall national picture of AIDS. Out of the 60 full blown AIDS cases, only seven were drug addicts, four from Manipur alone. In Nagaland and Mizoram too a similar if less alarm-

ing situation has been reported.

We have indicated in this article the need to distinguish addiction to different types of drugs and have pointed to the fact that most popular drugs are not linked with AIDS. We have also spoken of the different methods of taking drugs and found that only the injecting mode of drug use has the potential to cause AIDS. It is clear from all available evidence that, except for North-East India, the chances of spreading AIDS through intravenous drug use are small.

Does this mean that agencies working with addicts in areas other than North-East India need not learn about AIDS or do anything about AIDS? It is possible that if we

test drug addicts in other parts of the country for AIDS, we would come up with so low a rate of incidence, that policy-makers might well lose interest in the subject.

The following facts need to be borne in mind:

- 1. The life of brown sugar addicts is so marginalized and stressful that one may expect a high rate of incidence of STDs among them (for a detailed description of the life of addicts pre and post-addiction, see the NARC profile of 1282 addicts in nine areas of the county).
- 2. Brown sugar addicts from among the poor have a significant rate of incidence of tuberculosis.
- 3. Most addicts start with to-bacco, alcohol, ganja/charas and then move on to brown sugar. Again, some of them move from smoking brown sugar to chasing it and then to injecting it. This graduation process has so far been documented only in a limited fashion; it needs to be understood in all its dimensions, and plans to deal with the problem must be tailored to the peculiar needs of the area in question.
- 4. Nearly 24% of the addicts studied by the NARC team in nine areas have been arrested after they took to drugs. Institutional homosexuality is rampant in jails and correctional centres. This could be one mode through which drug addicts in India might acquire AIDS, more so than through the injecting mode, except in North-East India. In the other parts of the country, addicts would probably get AIDS because of their general low levels of immunity due either to tuberculosis or repeated episodes of STDs.

While there is no cause for panic, there is need to control the spread of intravenous drug abuse. General drug prevention programmes, posters, films, and television serials should scrupulously avoid showing intravenous drug intake which is not widely prevalent except in the northeastern corner of India. Training doctors in detoxification procedures would also be useful. And if we stop sending addicts to jails, it would be the first step towards containing AIDS among drug users.

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### Caring for the infected

KUSUM SAHGAL and D.K. TANEJA

THERE are 125 full blown cases of AIDS that have been diagnosed and officially recorded in India. But since most doctors are not trained to diagnose Ams, the actual number of cases is probably much higher. Besides, many cases are commonly mis-diagnosed as being merely infectious diseases like tuberculosis, skin infection and diarrhoea. This naturally leads to gross underrecognition and under-reporting. Estimates by the World Health Organization (WHO) indicate that there are about 2700 full blown cases of AIDS in the country today.

Apart from patients who have already developed the disease, there are a large number of those who have contracted the infection but in whom the disease is not yet fully developed. These are known as HIV carriers. To date, over 7000 such cases have been diagnosed. However, as all those who practise high risk behaviour or have been accidentally exposed to the risk have not been examined, there are obviously many more HIV carriers. WHO estimates the number as being between 2.5 and 10 lakhs in India.

These seemingly innocuous statistics tend to obscure the fact that the diagnosis and management of ADS cases and HIV carriers is a monumental task. The problem is compounded by several factors: the health personnel are not yet trained in diagnosis and management; the disease eventually runs a fatal course and there is no cure at present; there

is a moral stigma attached to the disease which induces people to conceal it; the period for the onset of symptoms after infection is very variable and can exceed as much as 10 years; and the spread of the disease through heterosexual transmission (promiscuity coupled with unsafe sex) or shared needles (in the case of intravenous drug abusers) leads to a geometric progression in the number of cases.

The devastating impact of the failure to control the spread of the infection is dramatically evident from the experience of Sub-Saharan Africa, where entire villages have been so ravaged that the population now consists of the very young or the very old. Lest we be lulled into the complacent belief that this cannot happen in India, we must contend with who's projected figure of 30 million HIV positives in India by the turn of the century. Obviously, all possible preventive steps are mandatory in this situation.

How well-equipped are we today to handle the management of those infected and provide them with adequate health care? The fact that India boasts of a variety of medical practitioners who specialize in different systems of medicine and work in various types of hospitals and health facilities only serves to make this issue more complex. In addition, the hospitals where the maximum number of AIDS patients and HIV carriers, mostly from a lower socio-economic background, are likely to present themselves with a wide

range of illnesses caused by the infection, are all overcrowded with poor or inadequate facilities.

At present there is no treatment for HIV itself. But many of the infections which are associated with it can be treated with standard drugs. As we are aware by now, HIV or the 'Human Immunodeficiency Virus' acts by destroying the immune system of the body. Consequently, even those micro-organisms which normally cannot do any harm to human beings, can flourish unchecked and cause diseases. The actual cause of death can thus be any of these acquired infections. The clinical management of mv-related infections within hospitals should therefore consist of diagnosis accompanied by treatment and counselling.

As the number of cases increase in the future, it will not be possible to consider hospitals with high treatment costs and already overcrowded facilities as the only option for HIV management. A rationally designed system that would provide homebased or domiciliary care for patients whose condition is not severe, and hospital-based care for those whose condition is life-threatening and therefore in need of emergency attention, or for patients who are in a terminal stage, will be the one suitable for our country. Home-based care can be monitored and improved by periodic visits by especially trained paramedical personnel.

▲n addition to the fact that HIV infection does not have a cure and invariably follows a fatal course, there is the matter of the social stigma which is attached to it. AIDS patients and HIV carriers and their families thus need tremendous social, emotional and psychological support. In these situations, the need for counselling, not only of patients but also of their families, is therefore not only desirable but also necessary. This can be done by nonmedical personnel/volunteers who are trained, motivated and devoted to this task.

Drawing on the experience of other developing countries would be quite useful in the cultural context of our country. An excellent system of care and counselling has been

developed in Chikankata rural hospital in Southern Zambia. In this hospital the patient is almost always looked after by a relative, with whom the counsellor arranges for the patients' eventual discharge. With the patient's permission, this relative is also informed of the diagnosis. Outpatients are kept informed by a member of the home care team and are encouraged to share information with other family members. The counsellor explains the various stages of HIV infection and the ways in which the virus is transmitted, encouraging the patient and other members of the family (if present) to ask questions.

As persons with HIV infection or AIDS may suffer feelings of shame, guilt, helplessness, alienation, bitterness, depression or fear of imminent death, the use of spiritual resources to overcome these has been integrated with medical and nursing care, counselling and education. This can take various forms—praying together or encouraging a spiritual perspective, an approach which has been greatly appreciated by beneficiaries.

Another interesting approach has been adopted by the Monte Fiore Medical Centre. Here volunteers participate in an intensive two-day orientation programme where they are forced to confront the realities of death and dying. This enables them to work effectively with terminally ill patients, the argument being that they can do so only after they themselves have come to terms with their own feelings about death. After completing their training these volunteers provide great support to people with AIDS. They escort them to clinic appointments and visit them in hospital. They also babysit, shop and organize social events for the patients.

Unless necessary precautions are taken, doctors, nurses, laboratory technicians and other personnel involved in the health care of AIDS patients and HIV carriers are potentially at risk of being infected through handling instruments, syringes, needles, blood, semen and vaginal secretions. Knowing that the disease, once contracted, runs a fatal course, they are afraid to handle these cases. They therefore try to

divert HIV infected people to other hospitals on the pretext that they are short of beds or facilities; sometimes, they openly refuse to care for the patients. However, training and continuing education is beginning to convince health care personnel that with adequate precautions the risk to themselves is negligible. The problem, though by no means resolved, is therefore becoming more manageable. However, efforts at educating health care personnel on precautions and safe practices need to be extended on a countrywide and continuing hasis

L he facilities presently available for the treatment and care of AIDS patients are woefully inadequate, to say the least. In an effort to rectify this situation, the Indian government has identified 13 medical college hospitals all over the country where facilities for the effective clinical management of both mv carriers and those suffering from AIDS will be set up. These colleges are: All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi; Madras Medical College, Madras; King George Medical College, Lucknow; S.M.S. Medical College, Jaipur; Sher-i-Kashmir Institute Sciences, Srinagar; of Medical Trivandrum Medical College, Trivandrum; Osmania Medical College, Hyderabad; Calcutta Medical College, Calcutta; S.C.B. Medical College, Cuttack; J.J. Hospital, Bombay; J.N. Hospital, Imphal; Medical College, Goa; and Bangalore Medical College, Bangalore.

So far, only four institutions i.e. Anms, New Delhi, the J.J. group of hospitals, Bombay, Madras Medical College General Hospital and the Calcutta Medical College Hospital have these facilities. These four units are equipped to provide symptomatic treatment for HIV infected persons and AIDS cases. They also run separate OPDs once a week for following up HIV seropositive cases/ AIDS cases. Besides this, 62 surveillance centres have been established for detecting AIDS infection and another 52 are planned to be established. Together, these will provide the country a wide network of facilities to diagnose AIDS.

There is a plan under the National AIDS Control Programme to train

one specialist from each hospital in metropolitan cities in the early detection of AIDS cases. These specialists, to be called PRADS (physicians responsible for AIDS diagnosis) will be responsible for training other junior doctors. They will also serve as nodal points for AIDS diagnosis and management with access to the latest information and techniques.

It is also proposed that one doctor from each of the district and peripheral level hospitals and in-patient services of other medical institutions be trained in the clinical detection of AIDS. Cases suspected to be positive will then be referred by these doctors to medical college hospitals for further testing and confirmation diagnosis.

In effect, however, only a few doctors have been given some training so far-mostly in the form of two-day workshops. Though this training does impart some very basic and rudimentary knowledge related to HIV and AIDS, it cannot really be considered adequate to equip doctors to effectively diagnose and manage AIDS cases, much less to impart training to others and to act as nodal or referral specialists. The training needs to be more intensive as well as extensive and more practically oriented. There is also a need to develop effective and standardized learning resource materials in order to improve the quality of training and extend it to a larger number of medical personnel.

One important area of concern in the treatment of HIV carriers or AIDS cases in a hospital or any other health facility is the risk of spreading the infection to other patients or even to doctors and other health care workers like nurses and laboratory technicians. We know that needles and syringes or other equipment, if contaminated with blood or semen or vaginal fluids, can transmit this infection through accidental exposure. Yet there exists considerable ignorance and misinformation in this respect.

HIV carriers and AIDS cases can certainly be treated in general hospitals and health facilities where other patients are treated. The only thing that has to be observed and enforced is the adoption of adequate sterilization procedures and safe handling of instruments. Measures such as the wearing of gloves, aprons, macintoshes and using special containers for disposing syringes and needles along with the use of bleach to disinfect instruments will help in this regard. The Director General of Health Services, Government of India, has developed some guidelines for infection control and these are in the process of being communicated to health personnel. A fortuitous result of these measures will be a general fall in the rate of cross-infection and the transmission of other diseases through incorrect hospital procedures.

Uther sources of risk of my transmission are injections and minor surgical procedures undertaken by unqualified medical practitioners. A large number of them flourish in areas where qualified doctors are not available. Unfortunately, most persons who practise high risk behaviour utilize their services when they are ill. By and large these practitioners do not follow sterilization procedures, so vital in the prevention of HIV transmission. They are yet to be trained and motivated. Their patients also need to be made aware of the importance of sterilizing syringes, needles and instruments, so that they can insist that the medical practitioners whom they patronize should at least take the elementary precautions.

As AIDS cases, HIV carriers and their families need counselling services, a total of 72 counselling centres have been proposed. These are to be established in the cities of Bombay, Pune and Nagpur. It must be pointed out here that even apart from counselling, other facilities for the care of these patients, both existing and those planned to be set up in the future, fall far short of the requirement to tackle the complex problem of HIV carriers and AIDS patients. We cannot afford to wait for people around us to start dying like flies before rising to the challenge. Every thinking person concerned with the prevention of, and care of persons with, HIV or AIDS must start acting now. Would you start digging wells for water after a fire has engulfed the nation?

# Counselling only hope

JACOB K. JOHN

VIMLA is a young mother of three children who was told this evening that she had AIDS. The people in the hospital made a big fuss over her and told her a lot of things. Everything is a blur but she remembers that they told her not to worry, and that she was not to have sex without a condom. AIDS, a disease everyone knows is deadly and horrible and they said don't worry! Use a Nirodh!! How would she make Krishnan, her husband, do that? They did not speak of these things and he was often too drunk to care. Death! she was too young and healthy to die. There must be a mistake. She would take some money and go to the special doctor to get treated. Her family depended on her.

Vimla's bubble has just been burst by one of the harsh realities of life. If Vimla had not been tested and diagnosed, she may have gone on as normal until some time in the future when she would contract an infection or tumor as a result of her immune suppression and die. As matters stand, there is no sign of a drug or vaccine against the virus and it is likely to be many years before something is commercially available. Within the present body of knowledge, looking after someone like Vimla hinges on effective counselling.

As against advising, counselling implies various additional inputs. It is a process of dialogue and relationship between the counsellor and patient, which in the case of mv, aims at prevention of transmission and providing psychosocial support. The process implies helping the individuals achieve this by maximum utilization of their own resources. The natural tendency when dealing with patients is to take decisions for them and tell them what is good for them. This often happens because the therapist knows a lot more about the technical aspects of the problem than the patient and can evaluate circumstances in the light of this knowledge, and thereby decide what is 'best for the patient'. Here the implication is for the patient to accept the therapist's advice and be 'better off'.

This kind of counselling is adequate and effective for issues like dosage of medicines, special diets etcetera, where the input is purely technical. But when it comes to complex issues like changing behaviour, such directive advice would be like telling an underachieving student, 'study three hours a day', inducing little change. What is therefore required in counselling is to give the patient enough information to make him understand what the problem is, explore options for action, evaluate with him the possible outcome of these actions and then get him to chalk out a programme of change. It is worthwhile continuing this process and reinforcing behaviour change as it takes place.

Training and practice of counselling and psychotherapy could vary considerably depending, among other things, on the theoretical 'school' of psychology to which the counsellor belongs. Even the understanding of these terms could differ among experts. Despite these differences, there are certain common basic traits required in caring for someone in a crisis. For example, a willingness to listen, empathy, being non-judgemental, having good communication skills, etcetera.

In relation to HIV and AIDS, counselling needs can be grouped into four broad areas: (i) Pre-test counselling—to one who is untested or to be tested; (ii) post-test counselling—done when breaking news about the result of HIV testing; (iii) support to those who are known to be HIV positive, to help in coping to live with the infection; and (iv)

counselling the dying. Broadly, these areas also represent the stages in the natural progression of the disease. The focus of attention is different for each stage and needs to be evaluated within the Indian context.

Pre-test counselling, or counselling someone who has not been tested, is probably the commonest form of counselling practised. This term is inappropriate as it seems to imply that the test is the nodal point. However, it has been used widely and the term seems here to stay. The objectives of counselling here appear to be twofold. First, to assess the level of risk-related behaviour an individual participates in and focus on changing or modifying it to reduce the risk of infection. Second, and incidental to the first, would be an assessment in terms of the need for an HIV test and to encourage the individual to have it done.

A detailed discussion with the patient before testing him or her has many advantages. It provides an opportunity to highlight the need for testing, and a chance to explore the meaning of the result with the individual long before the emotional component of a positive (or negative) result intervenes. This opportunity can also be used to plan about how to cope with the impact of the test, about who would need to be informed, who could be of help and support etcetera. At the very basic level it is an opportunity to address preventive strategies against HIV infection to the individual.

Had Vimla been adequately counselled before testing, her perplexity and concerns may have been considerably less. She might even have come to the clinic with someone who could have been a support and help at that point. The emotional impact or the shock of being infected cannot be taken away; but the blow would have been softened. Further, given the general tendency of patients not to return to the hospital or clinic, the initial exposure would have been a good opportunity to sensitize a person about the risks that they are taking and prevention which is possible. Using condoms during sex where the risk is high, or

not sharing needles when injecting drugs, are simple and effective messages which can be communicated.

The most painful chore for anyone is having to break news which is bad or unwelcome. Post-test counselling for those whose results have been negative is relatively easy. Focusing on the need, if any, for a retest after the window period and re-emphasizing change in behaviour keeping prevention in mind often closes the chapter in most situations. Occasionally, an HIV negative partner goes into depression for being the 'survivor' and may need additional help.

**B**ut breaking bad news about the test being positive is difficult and challenging. This needs special skill and a high degree of compassionate understanding. However, done with care, particularly if the ground has been prepared with significant inputs before testing, this exercise can be of immense help. The reaction of patients receiving news about their HIV positive status is very similar to the reaction of people who have been recently bereaved. It is also comparable with the response to any serious or terminal illness, but is generally more prolonged. Shock, denial, anxiety, depression and anger are often encountered in these patients and can lead to significant problems. Alcohol abuse, suicide and even homicidal gestures have been observed, apart from a significant increase in psychiatric morbidity. These need to be recognized and managed appropriately.

Shock and denial in the immediate post-news phase is common. Vimla can't really remember all that happened in hospital. It is all a blur. Most of what was told to her did not even register. A careful therapist would face this and go at Vimla's pace of understanding, over more than one session if necessary. The meaning of being HIV positive, the social and long-term implications and the strategy for care have to be worked out. Vimla is likely to spend a lot of money 'shopping around' for doctors who may not be willing to see her since she is HIV positive. Or, they may give contradictory advice. If Vimla carelessly ventilates her overwhelming worries to a neighbour, she might well find the new spreading like wild fire ending with social ostracism for her family and herself.

Similarly, other issues related to available social and family support, relationships, health, prevention of infecting others at risk, are all areas to be explored at this time. While aiming to teach Vimla factors preventing transmission of the virus from her to others, various valueladen questions arise. Should her sexual parter be informed—even without her consent? There may be a possibility of 'being caught out' at promiscuity, implied infidelity or homosexuality, which could play havoc on relationships between couples, and by extension, the family. Anticipating and mitigating these conflicts would be useful.

Problems at work with colleagues and employers may also need to be dealt with. In certain situations the counsellors may have to intercede and educate key people in the environment around the patient. The faster these interpersonal issues are resolved, the better the help and support they can give the patient. The extent of understanding about the disease, the emotional implications and planning for health are important. Vimla may, for example, be very angry with her husband who by his behaviour got her ill. This anger could be expressed in very destructive ways. Helping her acknowledge her feelings and alter her expression of them may prevent a potentially difficult situation. Choices related to the planning of a family, facing the risk of having an infected child or even the problem of children being left as AIDS orphans are also issues that need to be addressed.

A person with HIV infection does not necessarily have AIDS. This is an important distinction and one needs to keep this in mind. Our knowledge about immunity and the immune system is rudimentary, but some factors like repeated infections, psychological and social stress, malnutrition etcetera, are suspected to compromise immune functions more quickly. An effective understanding of such facts would certainly help the patient. Similarly, dietary advices

and, in our context, getting someone like Vimla in touch with a medical team who will care for her without bias or discrimination, would be useful. Here again, it may fall on the counsellor to organize sessions for various medical teams on HIV/AIDS not only to educate them but also to reduce their fears and unfounded concerns about contracting the infection themselves. Since this needs a higher level of skill and training, counsellors capable of this ought to be available, particularly as the prevalence of the disease increases.

Dupporting an HIV positive person in the long term is essentially an extension of post-test counselling. Here the emphasis shifts from breaking the bad news to helping the patient cope with the knowledge of his infection and to come to terms with the reality of the situation. Also, pre-planning against and continuing to evaluate for potential crises forms an important task in this phase. Tackling ethical, social and medical crises often becomes the bulk of care needed by the HIV positive person. Emotional crises occur periodically as time passes, often precipitated by some minor event or the other. These situations become considerably more acute as AIDS sets in. Frequently, physical debility and chronic illness means a loss of employment, which further compounds the stress. Counselling helps patients to face this reality while trying to maintain a degree of hope which is again realistic.

Working with a population of patients who are abusing drugs adds on another management challenge to the counsellor's role. The risk of acquiring HIV infection is particularly high among those who share needles and syringes. Further, a normally careful person may throw caution to the winds after being inebriated. These factors are doubly important in the person already infected. Other risk behaviour may also be higher among these individuals. For example, there may be a higher prevalence of prostitution or blood donation to support their habit. Counsellors working with such clients would need a far higher level of training and skill, particularly as the Lchallenges ahead of them increase. Further the denial by the patient about their habit and the legal and social implications of drug-taking can make the situation very complex.

Caring for the terminally ill is a relatively new speciality. With the advent of high technology, particularly in developed countries, terminal illness implies heroic treatment measures. In our country most people have neither the access to such care nor the means to afford it. Nevertheless, in the inevitabe situation, keeping a person comfortable and caring for him with compassion could help him die with dignity. Hospices have come up abroad to this end, but in India, apart from a few in some of the cities, this type of care is not really available. Even if available, it is unlikely that most people would be able to afford it. Hence the bulk of our patients have to be looked after by their families at home. Here it would be important not only to support the patient, but also the families as they would be under considerable stress with their resources stretched to the limit. Getting infections treated early and effectively improves longevity for the patients with a minimum of expense. Helping the client live out his remaining life with dignity is also something that should be aimed at.

In the fight against HIV, the counsellor comes through with myriad roles and important responsibilities. It is also critical that the counsellor works as part of a team, liaising closely with the medical, educational and other social agencies. Effective training and skill is called for and considering the burden of their role, the burn-out among counsellors is high and needs to be cared for. Keeping abreast with the ever increasing body of knowledge related to HIV and AIDS and the multiple ethical dilemmas relating to confidentiality etcetera are issues a counsellor has to be responsible for.

Given these various considerations, the question arises about who should be the counsellor? It is unlikely that a large new cadre of staff can be recruited to fill this role. Hence the thing to do would be to utilize available resources from within the community. Traditional res-

ources (though already stretched) can be found within the existing health system-doctors, nurses, psychologists, social workers and paramedical staff. While these personnel can be trained and used, they are unlikely to meet the demands ahead of them. Stated strategic policy looks at the involvement of the nongovernment resources within our community to provide a lot of this input, particularly in the educative/ pre-test counselling areas. Innovations being experimented with in this context include using of trained personnel to conduct groups and initiate self-support groups to minimize staff inputs. Using lay counsellors and educators from nontraditional areas like village leaders, priests, teachers etcetera is also being tried. These have met with variable success and need to be explored further. Integrating HIV prevention and care with the existing facilities in the community is important in the effectiveness of the programme.

All this calls for adequate and effective training. Given the diversity of intervention strategies in the psychological realm, and the lack of accreditation of such skill, the basic availability of counsellors has been pitiful in our country. It is not that such services were unnecessary before the advent of HIV/AIDS. The need for effective counselling has been talked about all along for all forms of chronic, terminal and socially stigmatized illnesses. Similarly, for problems like drug abuse and alcoholism, marital disharmony and a host of social problems, counselling has been advocated and frequently given lip service. The lack of effective means of teaching communication and interpersonal skills as well as of evaluating them, only tends to worsen the situation.

Training in counselling requires an ongoing practical, supervised input with a high teacher/student ratio. The skill improves with experience but some of the basic training can be imparted economically. Finally, if the HIV/AIDS situation allows for the establishment of trained counsellors as part of a caring/supporting team, our society would have at least gained something from this new disease.

# Role of NGOs

SHYAMALA NATRAJ

THE need to involve non-government organizations (NGOs) in HIV/ AIDS control in India is one of the most commonly expressed sentiments in any discussion on AIDS control. Along with such key concepts as 'safe sex' 'behaviour change' 'empowerment' and 'community', NGO involvement has been the subject of countless papers generated by every conceivable health-related organization in the AIDS circuit, starting with the grand-daddy of them all, the World Health Organization. The WHO commitment to encourage NGO involvement itself is indisputable, though the mechanisms it has adopted, notably the emphasis on importing expensive technology and expensive experts, rather than supporting and augmenting local resources and capabilities—are currently being questioned in many quarters.

Predictably, the Indian government, at both the national and the state levels, has parroted the who perspective on the need for NGO involvement in AIDS control without, however, recognizing what this commitment might entail. Tragically enough, most NGOs are not pushing the government to be more specific in its avowed intentions and are unable to recognize the burden this obvious lack of political will is inevitably going to place on them.

It is indubitable that an epidemic is already upon us. Though government spokespersons were the first to own up to the existence of a crisis

situation while discussing the 85million dollar World Bank IDA Ioan a few months back, no state-level AIDS campaign of any significance has yet emerged. When huge numbers of people start falling ill and dying, as they soon will, we will all be implicated in the murder—the government for refusing to spend money which it has specifically earmarked for AIDS control and for turning a blind eye to the need for immediate, large-scale intervention, NGOs for their inability/unwillingness to respond in time to minimize the setback to development that the HIV/AIDS epidemic is bound to cause, the planners and decision-makers for continuing to promote skewed discourses on AIDS, and everyone of us for contributing to the studied silence.

Over the decades that NGOs have been working in development, no models that challenge existing power structures have emerged. It is clear that traditional welfarist responses have not contributed to change in any area. It is highly unlikely that these will be effective in addressing AIDS. In this article. we shall attempt to define the problem of HIV/AIDS in terms of development, and to suggest some directions for people outside government, including NGOs, to work in. We shall at the same time try to touch upon some of the practical elements that will go into shaping these responses.

We can today make a direct correlation between the unprecedented increase in the movement of people, goods and ideas around the world, to the spread of the epidemic and the efforts to contain it. As Jonathan Mann has stated: 'This movement has created a global interdependence in health as much as in economic culture and politics. Global health interdependence, however, has been more difficult to recognize and our capacity to participate actively in shaping the history of health will depend upon our ability to understand and respond creatively to this fundamental reality.'

Lost writing on AIDS as a development issue views it as a problem that will exacerbate traditional problems of development: poverty, severe underemployment, food shortage, inadequate health care, subordination of women, illiteracy, debt etcetera. This is obviously true. AIDS enters into pre-existing contexts and highlights existing conditions. The efforts to stem the epidemic therefore need to take into consideration efforts to address some of the social realities. The challenge of working in the field of AIDS today is to see if it is possible to confront AIDS, in all its complexities, in a way that might alter the existing status quo, and put the development process ahead.

The primary vectors of HIV transmission have been conclusively determined. The virus spreads through the exchange of certain body fluids: blood, semen and vaginal fluids. What we now need to know urgently is who is getting infected and why. What are the social factors influencing the vulnerability of people to HIV infection? To answer this question the focus will have to rest on the differential access of people to information, services, power and other social support systems critical to any development.

There is sufficient evidence in the experience from around the world over the last few years to show that it is only possible to slow the spread of HIV if three key elements are present simultaneously.

Information/education: The decision of both governments and NGOs to incorporate HIV/AIDS concerns in

their work has tended to follow the expansion of HIV infection in any given region. This has meant that access to information available is usually at a stage where its usefulness is not optimal. While access to information does not guarantee that mistakes will not be made, it is an essential first step. The question we need to ask ourselves is: Should our government be encouraged to take on the responsibility of providing accurate, updated information or should we take this into our own hands in order to be effective?

Health and social service: On the one hand India has one of the world's largest networks of primary health care services spread throughout the country. These are supposedly staffed by an experienced and trained core of medical and community-based social workers. On the other hand it is widely recognized that these services remain largely under-utilized because of their intrinsic inability to be relevant to community needs. A part of this problem is also the inability to address oneself to needs that may not be visible for the simple reason that discourses around those issues have often been neglected-the problèm of stos for instance. Thus the medical system today is often uni-dimensional and follows a linear progression, even though all of us recognize that as human beings we need to look for patterns of holistic care. The spread of HIV is going to render this demand more visible. Fortunately, we still have a little time to respond sensitively to the demands for psychological and social support that will be as crucial as medical support and to be able to build up mechanisms to provide these services.

One obvious reality is that the spread of the epidemic will place such enormous demands on the health care system that existing formal structures may not be able to meet them. When thousands of people fall ill and start to die, a total dependence on the system is bound to result in failure. Thus there is a simultaneous need to prepare communities to be able to cope with caring for the sick and dying people and to find the resources to do this within the community itself. A gen-

uine effort towards this is bound to throw up systems of support that go beyond the needs of HIV and AIDS.

Social environment: Perhaps the most critical component among these is the provision of a supportive social environment. It has been noticed that where this does not exist, HIV prevention is usually not given the chance that it deserves. As more and more cases of infection become visible, there is going to be a corresponding increase in tendencies towards discrimination of affected people. By this we do not merely mean people who are infected with the virus or those who actually have AIDS. Rather, we need to include other people who are also directly affectedchildren, families and other dependents.

Examples of discrimination against people affected by AIDS abound around the world. India is no exception. There are several instances of people being thrown out of jobs, of not being provided with sufficient health care, and of being excluded from their communities. This has led to an increasing invisibility of the extent and range of the epidemic, which in turn has only served to further its spread. Thus efforts for effective AIDS control will necessarily have to address the larger issues of the ethics of health and power, and access to resources.

We shall now try to discuss and examine each of these areas in the particular context of the spread of Hrv in the country. We know that in India, unprotected sexual intercourse is the largest cause of HIV infection. The obvious solution would seem to be to promote protected sexual intercourse or to use the accepted term, 'safe(r) sex'. In examining the difficulties inherent in such an obvious and readily cognizible course of action, we can begin to pinpoint larger issues of development that need to be constructively addressed in order to frame an effective response to AIDS.

The majority of people in our country today are unaware about HIV and AIDS; whatever knowledge they have does not relate meaningfully to their lives. On the one hand, for most people no information exists. On the other, the

information which exists does not provides any tools that people can use to protect themselves from vulnerability to HIV through sex. Even discussions on safe sex do not provide any clear concepts that can help people practise it. 'Safe' does not merely imply a choice between monogamy and the use of condoms, though both of these can be included. Even where the use of condoms is the only solution, nobody talks about the right way in which to use them. Research shows that most men simply don't know how to use condoms and are unlikely to ask. Unless 'safe sex' is made meaningful and acceptable to people in their own lives, the statements carry no value. Thus for information to be effective in this case, we need to reexamine the ways in which we, as a community, talk about and respond to our sexual instincts, needs and actions.

It has been recognized that a factor in the spread of HIV infection is the lack of medical and other healthrelated services that meet the felt needs of people in ways that are accountable to them. For example, there are very few people in the country today who have access to adequate health care. Even where this is available, stories of faulty treatment or unnecessarily dangerous practices are common. Several instances exist where my has been transmitted through infected blood or blood products, infected equipment used in invasive procedures or through transplantation of infected organs. In each of these cases efforts to stem the spread of infection will necessarily need to go beyond the requirement created by HIV/AIDS and address the ethics of health care and its availability as a whole.

The power to make informed choices, as a concept, finds universal intellectual acceptance. Yet the inability to do so meaningfully is the fate of the majority. Very often this has less to do with access to information and more to do with the existing social realities that dictate the ability of people to negotiate such choices.

One clear example is the inability of women to negotiate sexual equality within a relationship. It is well recognized that women are much more vulnerable to HIV infection than men. The most important reasons for this are not medical but are rooted in a social environment that actually promotes this vulnerability. woman working in prostitution is constantly running the risk of infection each time her client does not use a condom. Yet her inability to demand the use of the condom and the simultaneous reluctance on the part of the client to understand the risks involved, leads to the further spread of the infection. The critical inference here, however, is that effective control of HIV lies less in the availability and knowledge of safe sex and more in creating an environment in which these women can make choices and act on them.

Now that the ramifications of the problem, beyond its medical connotations, are clear, we can define some of the key elements that go into shaping effective responses.

The capacity to motivate and susthe involvement of affected communities is going to be a critical issue in the NGO response to AIDS. In Western countries, the initial responses to the spread of the infection came from communities most directly affected and thus had their roots in needs which were directly experienced. Traditionally, however, in India as in most other developing countries, NGOs have invariably come from outside the community and have initiated programmes within the community which they have then adopted as their own. This top-down approach still exists and may prove to be a barrier to effective AIDS control. NGOs thus need to redefine the concept of communities, perhaps even contract existing definitions, in ways that will involve the people most directly affected. This will be a challenge particularly in the context of affected communities which are unlikely to be able to make themselves visible.

The direction of, and the response to any development activity depends in the long run on the political climate in which such an activity is initiated. Thus the ability to create a political space is crucial. Historically, countries which have quickly recognized the scope and dimension

of the HIV problem and the critical role of NGOs in addressing this have been most successful in minimizing the damage. In India this recognition remains a distant dream. However the importance of manoeuvring and operating in such a space is a key element for any successful programme and NGOs need to create mechanisms that promote such a course of action.

Traditionally, NGOs are not involved in the political process. Historically, the moralistic concept that because we do good we should be supported, has not worked. We need to be more clear about what is going on and what we have to offer and we must focus on getting more public health people into the policy arena. We must learn to translate the issue of AIDS into something that can help build coalitions across the board.

The ability to build and sustain coalitions for lobbying and advocacy is another element in a successful intervention. While some of us realize that the problems of AIDS go beyond public health, we need to be able to project this reality on to other groups that can come together to press for changes in the system which can help the process of development. Some fundamentals for coalition building are that everyone is ultimately trainable, that media can be used effectively, that we need to initiate mechanisms that demand accountability from our governments, that we do have the expertise and can be effective as advocates, and finally that there is an alliance to be struck with people inside the government.

This, however, does not imply that as NGOs we become co-partners in the government's attempts to abdicate its own responsibility. We need instead to examine what we can do best and what it is that governments have a moral responsibility to do. Further, we need to be able to create mechanisms that facilitate this process.

Isolated efforts to control AIDS cannot and will not succeed. Only a genuine societal and community-based response can help lead the way forward.

# Legal issues

ANAND GROVER

RIGHT from the beginning the response of Indian officialdom to the onset of the AIDS pandemic has been characterized by ad hocism. At the time when the first case was detected in the gay community in the USA, it dismissed AIDS as a 'Western' disease, unlikely to appear in India. Five years later, when the first case was detected in Tamil Nadu, officials in other states like Manipur believed that it would not reach them. Now, with about 0.25 million detected HTV carriers in India and a projection that by 1995 India will have the largest population of HIV carriers in the world (about 25% of the global HIV population), our bureaucracy has still to enunciate a clear-cut strategy to combat the spread of the virus.

There is no dispute today that globally, HIV will emerge as the lar-

gest killer of the decade. Fortunately, this fact has been acknowledged even in India. HIV/AIDS has become subject of the most intense research. It is well known now how the disease is transmitted and how it is not. Three clear modes of transmission have been identified: through sexual intercourse; through blood and blood products; and from mother to child (perinatal transmission).

Moreover, it is also well known that transmission has nothing to do with high risk groups such as gays, intravenous drug users, prostitutes etcetera but is related to the fact that the HIV infected person indulges in unsafe practices such as unsafe, unprotected sex etcetera. Thus a heterosexual person is as likely to get infected if he or she indulges in unsafe sex as is a gay person, assu-

ming that both have the same level of sexual activity.

It has by now been clearly established that HIV is not transmitted through the casual person to person contact i.e. by the sharing of food, water, toilets, drinking or eating utensils, protective clothing, telephones and so on, or by sneezing or coughing, kissing etcetera. Transmission of HIV requires a heavy exchange of body fluids from an infected person, which in everyday contact situations does not reach the critical threshold level.

In the war against the spread of HIV, two clear-cut policy responses have been articulated which are internally and logically consistent:

(a) Mandatory testing, followed by isolation of the HIV positive person, which I shall refer to as the isolationist response; and (b) No compulsory testing, with the integration of HIV patients in the community: protecting their confidentiality and ensuring non-discrimination against them. I shall call this the integrationist response.

The World Health Organization (who) and the world community at large have adopted the integrationist response. Some countries like Cuba and Rumania opted for the isolationist response, but in these countries the experience proved to be a disastrous failure.

The isolationist response, if implemented strictly, requires the mandatory testing of the whole population. In a country like India, this is economically infeasible. In practical terms, therefore, this would boil down to testing only the so-called 'high risk' groups i.e., prostitutes, intravenous drug users and homosexuals. Apart from the fact that this would be irrational (as HIV infection is not related to sexuality but to unsafe sexual practices) and reinforce prejudices against HIV carriers, thereby encouraging discrimination, it will defeat the very object of the programme inasmuch as it will drive persons of the 'high risk' groups underground. The isolationist response is thus doomed to be a failure.

The problem with Indian bureaucracy is that since it has not been

able to clearly define its response—whether isolationist or integrationist—it has been unable to enunciate it with any precision either. Though at the formal level it has accepted the integrationist response, probably and mainly because of who and its funding as also some change in the attitudes of the bureaucracy, the ground realities are otherwise. Also it has not understood that both responses, isolationist and integrationist, require the backing of the law.

It will be readily seen that mandatory testing and isolation deprives a person of his or her liberty. Now, under Article 21 of the Constitution of India, no person can be deprived of her or his liberty or life except by procedure established by law. Read with Article 14 (equality and non-arbitrariness), this has been held to mean that firstly there has to be a law, i.e. a statutory enactment, providing for deprivation of liberty; and that law must be fair, just and reasonable, both substantively and procedurally. For instance, by taking recourse to the Public Health Amendment Act, the state of Goa had enacted a law providing for mandatory testing and isolation of HIV positive persons. This was challenged on the grounds of violation of Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution. The Goa bench of the Bombay high court rejected the challenge except on the limited ground of allowing the person affected an opportunity to rebut the findings of the HIV test. The central government had also introduced a bill along similar lines, but had to withdraw it after protests by human rights groups.

The integrationist response has equally to be backed by the law. The fallacy of Indian bureaucracy is to assume that the integrationist response is based solely on the awareness programme and nothing more. Certainly awareness, both of the person infected by HIV and the public at large, is at the core of the programme, but it cannot work unless it protects the legal rights of HIV patients

In positive terms, the integrationist response would imply (a) a right to

information about the HIV test being conducted and its implications; (b) a right to refuse to undergo the HIV test; (c) a right to confidentiality about the HIV status of the person who has undergone the test; and (d) a right against discrimination in employment, education, travel, services, etcetera.

Though some of these rights are implied under the common law (judgement made in England) which we follow in India, they can only be ensured if they are included in the law statutorily i.e. by an enactment. An integrationist response without the aforesaid rights being guaranteed by a statutory law, is meaningless. This is exactly what is happening today.

I hus, while the AIDS control programme based on the integrationist approach is officially off the ground, in practice there is wide-scale denial of the rights that have necessarily to accompany it. Patients are rarely given any information about the HIV test and its consequences. In any event, the doctors and the medical establishment does not treat this as à right. Nor is the right to refuse to undergo the test treated as such. On the contrary, it is the other way round. What the doctors prescribe, the patients must follow, unmindful of their rights. There is hardly any confidentiality maintained. Names of hiv infected persons are being freely bandied about in the media. Discrimination is rife in employment, services, travel etcetera. There is no way that these rights can be ensured without well thought-out legislation.

What this legislation should contain is briefly listed as follows:

#### A. Preamble

- 1. The law must state how HIV is transmitted and how it is not.
- 2. It must state that there is no scientific basis for isolation or quarantine.
- 3. It must mention that the spread of HIV can be combatted only with education and the protection of HIV patients' dignity and rights.

#### B. Testing

- 1. There should be no compulsory testing. All testing should be voluntary.
- 2. No clinical or diagnostic tests ought to be carried out without the informed consent of the patient concerned.
- 3. The state should provide facilities for unlinked anonymous testing. This will facilitate responsibility on the part of HIV infected persons.
- 4. Epidemiological studies should only be conducted through unlinked anonymous testing.
- 5. Testing must be preceded by pre-test counselling and, if positive, by post-test counselling.

#### C. Confidentiality

- 1. When the doctor comes to know of the patient's HIV status, he must be obliged to inform the patient and the patient's right to this information must be recognized.
- 2. Doctors, health workers and medical personnel must be obliged to maintain confidentiality about the patient's HIV status.
- 3. In an ongoing treatment, the doctor or health worker may disclose the patient's HIV status to a co-health worker, who will then also be obliged to maintain the shared confidentiality.
- 4. Breaching confidentiality to inform the HIV patient's status to his/her family, partner or spouse is a sensitive issue. If the HIV patient is considered to be the central hub in the integrationist strategy, then he/she must be obliged to disclose his/her HIV status to the spouse/partner. Otherwise, the doctor or the health worker should have the right to exercise their discretion to do this.

#### D. Screening of Blood

- 1. There ought to be mandatory screening of mv in the manufacture of blood and blood products.
- 2. Such a condition ought to be incorporated in the licence to manufacture blood or blood products.

#### E. Health Services

- 1. No person ought to be denied health care or services on the ground that he/she is an HIV/AID patient.
- 2. All medical/health care personnel ought to be obliged to provide health care and services to HIV and AID patients.
- 3. All medical institutes, public and private, shall be obliged to provide protective gear, disposable and properly sterilized equipment to all health care workers dealing with HIV patients.
- 4. All hospitals, clinics and other such medical establishments must be required to follow mandatory procedures regarding the handling of HIV patients and blood.

#### F. Anti-Discriminatory Provision

- 1. No person shall be discriminated against in the areas of education, employment, travel or any service or benefits either in the public or the private sector on the ground of his/her HIV status.
- 2. No person shall be obliged to undergo HIV tests as a condition for obtaining employment or education or for availing any services or benefits including travel, health care, etcetera or for the continuation of these services.

Even today, HIV patients are being isolated and kept in prisons, particularly in Manipur. There have been a number of cases where doctors have refused to treat HIV patients. Witness the scandal caused by the refusal of resident doctors in New Delhi's premier medical institute, AIIMS, to treat HIV patients.

Thus, while the government, under the who sponsored programmes, mouths the integrationist response, an isolationist policy is being followed at the ground level. In these circumstances, it is incumbent upon the government to clearly enunciate that it has opted for the integrationist strategy and back this by enacting laws to protect the rights of HIV patients consistent with that response.

# A personal viewpoint

SABINA INDERJIT

'Are you crazy, you'll get AIDS.'
'Don't touch me.'
'What were they like?'

THESE were some reactions I got before and after I met Rohit and Vineet. Reactions from educated individuals. No, they couldn't have been serious, I told myself. But they were.

That was two years ago. I still remember trying to hold back my temper. A lot had already been written on AIDS. Still these individuals were ignorant, to put it mildly. I realized I had to make them aware of what the killer disease was. For after spending six hours with the two boys it was the minimum I, or for that matter anyone, could do.

That was our first meeting. The boys were exhausted. For we went over what they had gone through. As the hours passed I couldn't believe what I had heard. It was difficult to accept. The boys and their parents were being punished. Those holding the stick were doctors, friends, relatives, neighbours. Why? Because the two were infected by HIV.

Rohit, 31 and Vineet, 25, are haemophiliacs from birth. And it was through a blood transfusion that they got infected. Tests revealed HIV positive in Rohit's case and AIDS in Vineet's. 'We did nothing wrong. It was not our fault. Then why are we being persecuted,' they had asked then.

The family has been putting up a brave front since. Theirs is a battle

against the system. And the first move was to come out in the open. To date, the only ones in Delhi to have done so. It took a lot of courage and strength but the effort hasn't been entirely wasted. A beginning was made: today is better than yesterday, and tomorrow is what they look forward to.

The Oberoi boys come from a middle-class family. Their mother is a teacher in a government school and their father a retired government officer. They live in a small government flat in Sarojini Nagar.

As haemophiliacs, both Rohit and Vineet have grown up in the shadow of risk. The two have had to exercise the greatest care not to sustain injury of any kind. They could manage going to school only till the fifth standard. The school where their mother taught. Whatever else they have learnt is what their parents have taught them. Childhood was no fun. It was different. Not like the kids in the block.

They told me they had not played like other children. They stayed away from playgrounds for fear of getting hurt. They did not go to movies or any other form of entertainment for it was expensive to take a taxi (roughing it out in buses or scooters was not possible). And for long stretches they lay in bed—in pain.

For 14 years, i.e. till 1975, they had to depend on cold packs, pain killers and homeopathy to treat

haemophilia. Between 1975 and 1977 they managed to get unofficial treatment at the army hospital here. Official sanction for treatment at the same hospital got them through for the next 13 years. Fortunately, their father was able to manage it with the help of the health ministry.

But 5 June 1990 was a black day for them. It was the beginning of the mental and physical torture which was to follow. The boys will not be admitted as they were found to be HIV carriers, the army hospital had categorically told the family. It came as a big blow. No news could have been worse.

Where else would they get blood transfusion? Where would they have to go for treatment? Which hospital would provide facilities without any fuss? You and I would think the fear was uncalled for. They were not living in a small town. Delhi is, after all, the nation's capital. And its hospitals were well-equipped to deal with cases like theirs. The question of refusal could simply not arise. But it did!

Most hospitals, they say, turned them down, suggesting they go to X hospital. Only one hospital. It has facilities for AIDS cases, not us. But the boys were asking for mere blood transfusion. They were not given a hearing. They were being shunned. Their ordeal had begun.

They were treated like untouchables, they told me. They were humiliated. Doctors and nurses refused to take up their case. Their presence made the guardians of health pass snide comments. Even though medical journals say health workers need not fear getting infected if the required precautions are taken. Even though medical journals say 'people with HIV infection or AIDS need to be touched and given compassionate nursing care. They can be cared for without fear.'

Ironically Rohit and Vineet's mother too was not spared. I still remember their mother breaking down while narrating what she had been forced to go through. Those long hours of waiting to get her sons admitted, running from pillar to post, the taunts etcetera.

But circumstances forced her to swallow the insults, unashamedly hurled at her and her boys. They could not utter a word of protest. To whom could they protest, any way? After all, they were at the mercy of the medical profession. But then it couldn't go on forever. For how long could the boys treat themselves at home? They sometimes managed to give each other injections, and at other times sought their mother's help. For a very short period there was a sympathetic doctor who looked them up at home or whenever there was an emergency. He was a godsend, the family said. But due to some personal circumstance, he too had to leave.

At one time, the Oberois were forced to take Vineet to a private hospital when the doctors of X hospital refused to attend to them. They were forced not to disclose that their son had AIDS. For his condition was serious and they could not afford a refusal. The family realized it was not right on their part. But what could they do? After a day or two, when Vineet was recovering, the family told the doctor concerned what they had hidden. The latter then politely asked them to leave as the hospital did not have the requisite facilities.

would you blame the Oberois? I wouldn't. For it is the system which forced such a situation. Aren't they deprived treatment when they disclose they are carriers? The family was unhappy about it. The boys did not want to put others at risk. They did not want a repeat. For they realized it is only right to warn the hospital authorities so that the required precautions could be taken. The family started thinking about solutions.

And the one which appealed to them was to go public. And they did. They had already been branded by the medical professionals who had thrown the basic ethics of confidentiality to the winds. 'It was almost as if they had written HIV positive on our faces,' said the boys. What more did they have to lose?

So they appeared on TV news. Their version was followed by the hospital authority's A news agency,

too, put out an item on them. The family had taken its first major step. It was frightening. For now the neighbours, relatives, friends—all got to know. The boys' small world had shrunk further. Their visitors became fewer and fewer. They were being avoided like the plague.

They passed lengthy hours flipping pages of magazines, reading papers and books and watching video films. They had to somehow kill time. There were only few a persons they could talk to. 'So we spent time thinking and holding discussions between us,' said the boys. 'All meaningless.'

took up their case in a two-part article. This followed the six-hour meeting with them. The first dealt with the personal aspect, the second the hospital. Every claim of 'treating' the boys by the hospital was challenged. It had no answers to the questions raised. And the doctors concerned were an angry lot. I still remember a doctor hoping that my soul would not rest in peace! I attacked the government too. Its ministry's policies on AIDS care were hollow. They, however, would never admit it.

The family liked the articles. Many others did too. There were phone calls inquiring about the Oberoi brothers. Media persons wanted to interview them. Some people even offered help. I was happy. Like a child who had done a good deed. I felt a great sense of satisfaction that my writing could help somebody. Most important was that I had struck an equation with the boys and their parents. And it grew stonger over a period of time. If they ever had a problem they knew they could turn to me for help.

We were constantly in touch. The boys would share their fears. Whenever they had a problem with the hospital they would call. I remember having a sitting with the hospital's doctor over one particular problem. It was a long one. I found many contradictions in his explanation. But I did not want to aggravate the situation. My sole purpose was that the boys get treatment. And we were able to reach a compromise. Thank God.

Since then, things started improving. The X hospital opened its doors fully to them. The doctors tried to overcome their shortcomings. It was a good sign. Today, the hospital's arms unit is accepting cases readily. The attitude of doctors and nurses has improved. Earlier, says Vineet, the nurses refused to come to this unit. But this is no longer the case. There are five sisters and they are caring, say the boys. They touch us, they spend hours with us and they are sympathetic. Likewise, doctors who had refused to come from other wards now pay us visits.'

The family is also facing less problems in getting medicines sanctioned by the ministry. Medicines and treatment have been a great financial burden on the family. The amount runs into thousands of rupees every month! And at times the family has had to depend on a kind relative for supplies from abroad.

L he ministry, however, has recently cleared their file without wasting too much of time. And without making the boys run around for it. Could it be because the boys have spoken of their problems to the media-newspapers/magazines/Doordarshan? Could it be because somebody fears bad publicity? Could it be because of a sympathetic officer? Could it be because a social worker has spent hours to get the papers cleared? Could it just be that the government realizes its responsibility? I wish I knew. But it isn't important. What is, is that things are moving.

But not as fast as they should. The problem of AIDS has been known in the country since 1986, since the first cases were reported from Madras. I am certain Vineet and Rohit would not have had to face any problem had the government been quick to react, got on to the job on a war-footing.

I would like to raise certain questions. What has the government been doing for all these years? From what I gather it's been mere surveillance. Finding out how many cases there are in the country! What use of numbers when it cannot even provide the basic minimum care for

those detected as being infected? The government has time and again spoken of educating its doctors, of making them aware of the disease. It has said training is being imparted. A number of them have even been sent abroad for it.

The reality is that the government reacts only when there is a controversy. Crisis management. Or when newspaper headlines scream of the inefficiency and fiascos.

Remember a case in 1990 where the treatment of a diplomat with AIDS ran into rough weather in the same X hospital? Where doctors refused to conduct some tests on him? And when the diplomat died, his family members were forced to get his body embalmed at another hospital. Without disclosing that he had been infected with AIDS.

Why did the relatives need to go to another hospital for embalming when the patient was admitted, treated and had died in X hospital? The incident led to a big controversy, and the health ministry had to initiate an inquiry. But it turned out to be of little use. The relatives were made out to be the villians of the piece. Neither the hospital nor its doctors were reprimanded.

Last year there was another case where the same hospital had to call for a private gyaneacologist's services to deliver the baby of a woman suffering with AIDS. Why? Does the prestigious hospital not have competent doctors? It claimed it did but they had differed on the facilities available at their disposal. It led to yet another controversy. So, yet another inquiry followed. To date, it has not been completed. No one has been made answerable.

Last year again there was another controversy over little children being deprived of blood transfusion in a civic hospital. Why? Shouldn't be difficult to guess. They were thalassaemics and were HIV positive. The hospital's staff had refused to attend on them. The poor parents pleas fell on deaf ears. The staff stood its ground. Not until adequate facilities are made available, they had insisted. The authorities had again woken up too late. Only after

they conceded to the staff's demands did the children get treatment. It was only right.

As if this were not enough, there was yet another controversy. Recently, a foreign student delivered a baby in the city's biggest hospital. The doctors later got to know that the student was HIV positive. They were a worried lot. 'We might have been infected,' they said. Basic requirements like gloves were not available in the hospital, they complained. The authorities took the easy way out: an inquiry was instituted. At the same time they made provisions for gloves etcetera.

If a particular hospital has facilities to treat AIDS cases, as the government claims, why did the student not go there? Was she aware of it? Does the public know of the facilities available in that hospital? Has the government made any effort to inform the public that such a facility exists? Also, why only one hospital? What about the other hospitals and dispensaries? What will happen when the numbers increase? Do we have the infrastructure to deal with a large number of HIV positive cases?

he cases cited above are the ones that were reported. There may be several more about which we may never know. But what we do know is this:

All this happened when the government had a Rs. 33 crore medium term plan for 1990-1992! All this when it has set a of written guidelines. All this when the government claims to have organized orientation sessions for doctors and paramedical staff. All this when it has sent some doctors abroad. All this when the ministry has a separate cell to look into AIDS. All this when the country is being pumped with 100 million dollars by the World Bank just for tackling AIDS. Where is all this money going? The public and the media will have to be more alert.

On its part, the government claims that the press overreacts. It unnecessarily sensationalizes the cases. I don't think that this is correct. For if it wasn't for the fourth estate, who would care for the patients? At the same time, the government and

the medical professionals say the media has to play an important role in educating the masses. But have they ever sought that help? Have they even made an effort to take the media into confidence? I can't remember a single instance. Has the government made any use of the mass media to launch an awareness campaign?

What I know is that it tries to feed the media with information about its ambitious plans to tackle the AIDS problem. Plans for infection control in hospitals. Plans for training doctors. Plans for having an insurance scheme for those medical professionals who may get infected with the virus while on duty. Plans for sending doctors abroad for training etcetera.

**B**ut these only serve to camouflage the main issues. I know for a fact that hospital infection control guidelines have been in existence for a long time. But no one implements them. And no one ensures that they are. I also know that only a selected few doctors, i.e. favourites' are sent abroad for training. Not that it is necessary to do this. One can learn through the innumerable journals on AIDS. This is not my view, but that of a doctor who is an authority on AIDS. If doctors do need to be sent then why not the committed ones? Also, it has been noticed that when it comes to practical work, many doctors are found to be missingl

I also know that these so-called orientation programmes exist merely on paper. My visits to a number of hospitals in the last three years have revealed that only a few have the latest information on AIDS. The rest are not aware even of the basics.

I must also say that a large number of ministry officials have been known to attend seminars and conferences on AIDS held abroad. Perks of the profession, some would say. Why are they wasting the tax payers' money? Do they in any way contribute to the handling of AIDS cases? Do you think our hospitals can apply the same yardstick as that applied in hospitals in the West? The hospital conditions, I would say, simply don't match.

Interestingly there is a large section of doctors that is perturbed by the government's decision to spend a whopping amount of money on AIDS. Our country is plagued with problems like malaria, gastro-enteritis, rabies etcetera, which we still haven't been able to control. And in modern India people still die of minor infections because of lack of treatment. Is our policy moving in the right direction? We would probably need a national debate on the issue.

Now let's look at the individual's perception of the AIDS problem. Rohit and Vineet's case speaks for it very clearly. They say the situation has not shown much improvement. Their number of friends has not increased. Yes, many journalists have interviewed and filmed them. But only two or three have kept in touch. 'We feel the others just wanted to get a story. They got it. And that was it.' What about relatives? 'Those who have kept away have not come looking us up,' they say. What about neighbours? 'They have observed people coming and visiting us but on their part they have made no effort,' say the boys sadly. Except for one, who now pays regular visits. 'He does not care what others have to say,' the boys are pleased to note.

We must all ask ourselves why this uncaring, aloof, couldn't-be-bothered behaviour? Why a fear of even meeting them when medical journals have categorically stated 'AIDS cannot be passed on to anyone except by sexual intercourse or blood transfusion (infected syringes, needles, blood or blood products).' These boys, and-may be thousands like them, are hungry for affection.

Rohit and Vineet have gone through a lot in life. They have been brave and have learnt to live with their lot. But today they want to do something with their lives. For starters, they want to get people like themselves together. They are excited about setting up an organization. 'If there are many of us then maybe we will become a force to reckon with,' they say. They are keeping their fingers crossed that people join them, so they can at least make a beginning. I, too, am keeping mine crossed.



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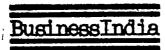
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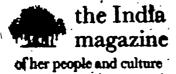
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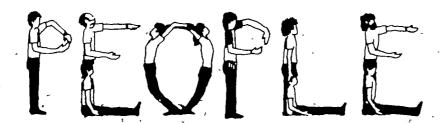
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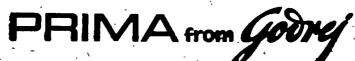
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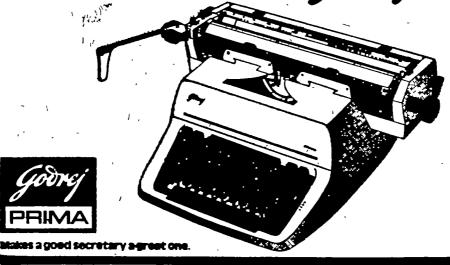
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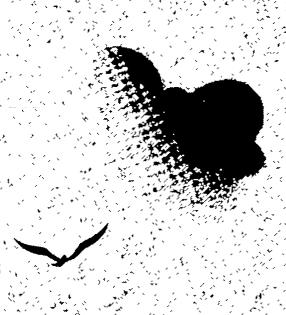
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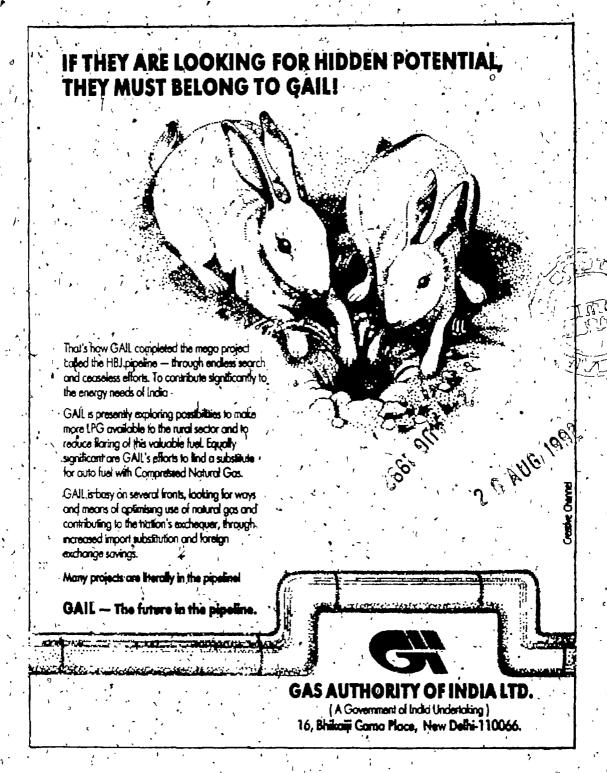
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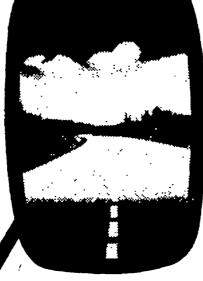
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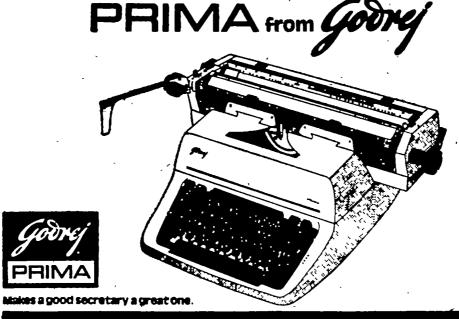


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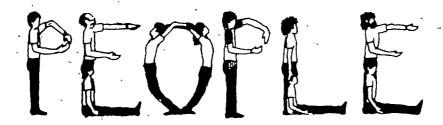
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# The problem

AN assessment of the relations between India and Japan can no longer be made today in terms of perspectives and frames of reference traditionally employed. The familiar post-World War II bipolar structures and frames of reference have crumbled. Both countries are groping towards a new comprehensive foreign policy paradigm to redefine and serve their interests in the new global situation following the end of the cold war, the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the US victory in the Gulf War and, most momentously, the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Both countries are reassessing their situation and exploring their options in the none too orderly unipolar/multipolar new world order, and as part of that, taking a fresh look at their relations with each other. Both, especially India, are undergoing major domestic, economic and foreign policy shifts which impinge significantly on their relations with each other.

India has recently completed a year under the minority Congress government of P.V. Narasimha Rao and a year of what has been repeatedly called an irreversible policy shift towards a market-driven economy. The Prime Minister has recently returned from a visit to Japan that followed on the heels of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of Indo-Japanese diplomatic relations, and visits by the External Affairs and Finance Ministers earlier this year. This is therefore an appropriate moment to review Indo-Japanese relations and attempt to see where they are headed.

A good way to put the relationship in perspective would be to survey the two countries changing positions in today's world order, and the compulsions of the economic, domestic and foreign policy changes they are undergoing, before looking at what these imply for their relations with each other.

Starting with the Indian situation and assuming the reader's familiarity with it, the following basic points should suffice. In June 1991 the newly installed Congress government inherited an acute balance of payments crisis with foreign exchange reserves down to about a billion dollars, or two weeks worth of imports. On the brink of default, it launched an

economic stabilization programme that has been stated to be a fundamental directional change towards an efficient and internationally competitive market-driven economy. The programme, supported by an IMF standby credit arrangement of \$ 2.2 billion, is to be part of a comprehensive medium-term structural adjustment programme marked by sweeping deregulation, privatization and globalization of the hitherto controlled and planned economy.

As part of this shift, India is now actively wooing foreign direct and portfolio investment and technological collaboration with the removal of many of the major controls on foreign capital and technology. It is also actively seeking increased foreign aid on the softest possible terms to tide over the balance of payments crisis and meet its exceptional financing requirements over the next few years to support its stabilization and liberalization programme. Japan, being an economic superpower, now looms large in Indian economic and, therefore, foreign policy calculations as a potential supplier of aid, investment and technology.

Another vital aspect of the reorientation of Indian foreign policy is the collapse and disintegration of the Soviet Union and its consequences for India. Suffice it to say that this means the collapse of the Rupee Trade Area which accounted for about a quarter of our exports, the collapse of political support, especially in the UN Security Council on matters vital to India, and probably most importantly, the collapse of a relatively cheap and reliable source of arms supply, military technology, spares and components.

Coinciding with this disintegration is the unprecedented consolidation of the Western bloc under US leadership on political and strategic issues, their domination of the UN Security Council, the stepping-up of pressures on India and other countries on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Missile Technology Control Regime, defence spending and human rights, the redirection of cocom controls on strategic and dual-use technology exports from East-West to North-South, and so forth. Taken in combination with India's needs for exceptional external financing

and its long-term needs for access to developed markets and technology, the new world situation leaves India in an exceptionally weak and vulnerable position.

The overall strategic problem for an integrated foreign policy is, basically, how to access the necessary external aid, investment, loans, markets and technology required for supporting a painful economic restructuring programme at home. And to do this without allowing oneself to be pressured into dismantling vital national capabilities created at great cost over decades in the defence, nuclear, space and missile areas, necessary for long-term security in an unstable and continuingly insecure (and proliferating) regional and world order. Indian foreign policy is now being recast in the search for new friends, allies and issue-based coalition partners to recreate the room for manocuvre and bargaining power that was afforded by the policy of non-alignment in the bipolar order.

Japan's situation is also changing and so is its foreign policy. Japan is an economic superpower but maintains a very low political profile on the world stage. Japan's GNP is the world's second largest, next only to that of the United States and twice that of Germany. Its per capita income now exceeds that of the USA. It is the world's third largest exporter, with the world's largest trade and current account surpluses as of last year. It is also the world's largest net creditor. For the past several years it has been the world's largest direct foreign investor and the largest or second largest aid donor. It dominates the list of the world's largest banks and is second only to the USA in the list of the world's largest multinational corporations.

For countries like India, Japan can potentially be one of the most important sources of aid, direct and portfolio investment and commercial lending. It can also potentially be one of the most important sources of advanced technologies; especially in electronics, and often the only alternative supplier to the USA. It is noteworthy that US defence production has now come to depend significantly on Japanese-produced

electronic components. Also noteworthy is the fact that the Japanese domestic market is more than half the size of the US market.

However, despite its emergence as an economic superpower over the past decade, Japan maintains a very low political and military profile. Following its defeat in the Second World War, Japan concentrated on economic growth under the US-Japan treaty's security umbrella, forswearing a political and military role in world affairs. Especially important was the policy of limiting defence spending to 1% of GNP, the signing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the forswearing of any foreign military presence or role. Relations with the United States, economic and security, became and are still central to Japan's foreign relations. Communism was perceived as the main threat; specifically, the Soviet Union after the US rapprochment with China in the 1970s. Japan generally followed the US lead in world affairs. However, it was consulted less by the latter than by the European allies, even Germany, despite its far greater economic power by the 1980s.

This picture is beginning to change. For several years now, US-Japan relations have been marked by increasing friction over economic issues. The US has been running trade and budget deficits over the past decade or so, especially since the mid-1980s. The Japanese have meanwhile been running mounting overall trade and current account surpluses, the biggest trade surplus being with the US. Japanese surpluses have to a large extent been recycled to the US. Japanese portfolio investment in US government securities is critical to financing the US budget deficit, and Japanese direct investment and lending to the US has risen over the years and now constitutes the largest single destination of Japanese capital outflows.

These developments have led to growing trade friction, charges of unfair trade against the Japanese and widespread fears of Japanese economic domination in the US. Against the backdrop of relative American economic decline and a decreasing Soviet threat under Gorbachev, many American commentators have even identified Japan as the main threat to the US. Many

Americans also felt that Japan was freeloading under the US security umbrella and should pay more for its defence. In fact, US pressure on Japan to share more of the defence burden is one of the factors behind Japan's growing tendency towards political assertiveness today.

Developments in the last two years have given a strong push to the trend in Japanese foreign policy to translate its economic power into political power and evolve a political role for itself in the world order. In the Gulf War, Japan's contribution of \$ 13 billion was critical and was the largest non-combatant contribution. Yet Japan was consulted the least among the major allies. This biased Japanese opinion in favour of a more assertive political role in the world. In the period since then, the world economy has slid into recession and the Uruguay Round of GATT trade talks have remained deadlocked. The recent G-7 summit at Munich left the deadlock unresolved. With the impending unification of the BC and the formation of the North American Free Trade Area, the world seems to be lurching towards trading blocs. And in 1991, counter to predictions, Japanese trade and current account surpluses, including those with the US, rose.

And Japan, following a tight money policy, experienced a stockmarket crash and slow growth unprecedented in the recent past, and has not yet recovered its growth momentum. In fact, Japan became for the first time in years, a net importer of capital in 1991 as banks and corporations withdrew funds from abroad to pay off debts at home. These developments at a time of world recession and unresolved trade frictions, when the US, the Asia-Pacific region and the world economy depends increasingly on Japanese capital export, Japanese growth and import demand, have sharply highlighted the world's sensitivity to Japanese domestic and foreign economic policy and the world's and G-7's need for Japan's cooperation in world economic management. Against this background of global developments Japan has been moving to assert itself politically in the new world order in a way that is commensurate with its economic status.

The first and most important point to note about Japan's emerging political role in the world is that it consists of the translation of economic into political power. In other words, the political conditioning of its increasingly vitally necessary economic cooperation. This makes it essentially a status quo power working in tandem with the United States and other developed countries to preserve the world order and its power structure despite trade frictions with its developed partners. Japan's thrust will be to win a more closely consultative status with the United States on world issues and a greater voice within the club of developed countries, especially on matters vital to it. No longer will it be taken for granted by the United States and made to pay for US-determined actions. Japan's preferred world order option is that of a Pax Consortium of developed nations where the key decision-making for will be summits like G-7 or the boards of multilateral financial institutions.

Now that the UN has become a US—and Western—dominated organization with Russia's and China's acquiescence or abstinence and will play a larger role in world affairs, Japan is interested in making its presence felt in the UN. Japanese opinion has shifted in favour of restructuring the UN Security Council, including a permanent seat for Japan. Although it has not moved for an amendment of the UN Charter, which would be required for such a change, Japan feels that the present UN Security Council does not fully reflect the power realities in the world. Japan also has a problem with the continuance of the 'former enemy' clause in the UN Charter.

Thus Japan's preferred and emerging role will be one of co-management of the world order with the US/G-7/West/North, with Japan having a 'normal' role in line with its economic strength. In military terms too, Japan's role will be sought to be 'normalized', though within the framework of the US-Japan alliance. That is, it will assume a greater share of the defence burden (as it already has, crossing the 1% of GNP limit of defence spending under Prime Minister Nakasone) and taking part in un peacekeeping operations in cooperation with its allies. This is the significance of the PKO bill and Japanese participation in the UN peacekeeping forces in Cambodia, albeit in a non-combatant role. Japan's defence spending of \$ 28 billion is already the world's sixth largest and its surface fleet Asia's largest.

However, though Pax Consortium with a larger Japanese role in an open-economy world order with a restructured UN system is the preferred option, there are two other interrelated reasons for the Japanese thrust towards a more \_political role in the world. The first is the tendency towards trading blocs following growing trade frictions between the US, Europe and Japan, aggravated by large Japanese trade and current account surpluses and acquisitive investments abroad, and manifested in the deadlocked Uruguay Round and the failure to reach consensus at the Munich G-7 summit. Although closed blocs are impossible in an interpenetrated world economy, even limited closure combined with intensified Japanbashing in the US could lead Japan to explore its second-best option of a Western Pacific basin bloc, potentially from Siberia to New Zealand (to South Asia) under its leadership.

In the last 5 to 10 years this vast resource-rich region has increasingly become economically integrated with the help of Japanese aid, trade and direct investment and has enjoyed the world's highest growth rates. By the year 2000, the Western Pacific will have a GNP as large as the USA. Intra-regional trade and investment has been rising steadily as a proportion of the region's overall trade and invest-flows, and bilateral dependence on the US for trade and investment declining in relative terms. The region is a potential economic bloc under Japanese leadership provided the major political conflicts in the region are resolved and a framework of at least

political understandings if not a regional organization or treaty, is evolved.

But this is precisely what the Western Pacific region lacks. In the post-war period, bilateral treaties or informal understandings between Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, China, the Philippines and other ASEAN states, Australia and New Zealand on the one hand, and the United States on the other, characterized the region's alignments. ASEAN remained a loose, broadly pro-Western grouping, and the major conflicts—the 'three Chinas' problem, the Korean confrontation, Indochina hostilities—remain unresolved. So do Japan-Russia relations over the Kurile islands after the Munich summit.

The lack of regional security and political arrangements and continuing unresolved conflicts—the latest flashpoint being the Spratly islands—threaten to destabilize the regional situation as the US withdraws from the Philippines, abolishes its tactical nuclear weapons and downscales its presence. The US pull-out in this context is the second reason for an emerging political role for Japan. Japanese foreign policy aims to promote conflict resolution, disarmament, democracy and human rights along with economic openness, using its economic influence as leverage for such purposes so that continuing regional integration and growth, beneficial to and centred around Japanese investment and trade, are not threatened by political conflicts.

Aid has now explicitly been declared to be an instrument of diplomacy and last year a set of guidelines were issued whereby Japanese aid is to be 'sensitive' to four issues: defence expenditure and nuclear proliferation, democracy, human rights and economic openness. There has, so far, been no case of the guidelines being applied—the aid cut-off to Myanmar preceded the guidelines—but it is clear that Japanese aid will be increasingly conditional henceforth. Particularly if Japan wrests a more equal and consultative status from the USA in global management, wins a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, further builds up its armed forces, and thus strengthens its global political position.

Where do India and Indo-Japanese relations fit into this emerging scenario? The recent 40th anniversary of the establishment of Indo-Japanese relations and the Prime Minister's visit to Japan, both in June 1992, possibly mark the end of a phase and a new beginning. Historically, relations between the two countries have been dominantly economic, although those relations have been and are marginal for Japan. In fact, in the last 10 years, Japan has become increasingly important to India in trade and aid while India has become increasingly peripheral to Japan. Japan has over the past several years emerged as India's largest bilateral aid donor. For the current year 1992-93, it has pledged \$ 850 m, an increase of \$ 50 m in the Aid India Consortium package of \$7.2 bn. Until the collapse of India's credit rating in 1990, Japan had emerged as one of the main sources of commercial borrowing for India. As regards trade, India's trade with Japan has tended to stagnate. It grew from \$ 3487 m (1987) to \$ 3995 m (1989) before declining over the last two years to \$ 3713 m (1991). India's exports to Japan have risen from \$ 1530 m (1987) to \$ 2190 m (1991), being basically stagnant for the past two years. India's imports from Japan have declined four years in a row, from 8 2081 m (1988) to \$ 1523 m (1991), leading to the emergence for the first time of trade surpluses with Japan in the last two years of 8 366 m (1990) and 8 667 m (1991). The commodity composition of Indian exports has tended to stagnate, with 70% continuing to consist of iron ore, diamonds and marine products. But engineering, semi-manufactured iron and steel, and garments have increased, although in the context of stagnant trade and tiny Japanese market share. India's major imports from Japan consist of machinery, transport equipment and electronics.

As regards Japanese foreign direct investment (FDI) in India it has been extremely low by all indicators, being only 0.1% of Japanese FDI in 1990 and 0.2% of Japanese FDI in Asia in the same year. However, in the miniscule \$ 100-200 m a year of FDI inflow into India up to 1990, Japanese FDI has routinely ranked third or fourth largest after the USA, UK and Germany. And in 1990 it reached \$ 30 m, the highest after 1982. In the first quarter of 1992 it reached \$ 40 m, a significant rise (all figures pertain to approvals). Japanese FDI is considered one of the biggest potential sources of foreign capital and technology inflow and is being eagerly wooed. However, India still has only about 0.1% of cumulative global Japanese FDI of \$ 311 bn by 1990 and less than 1% of Japan's gargantuan imports of \$ 236 bn in 1991 compared to East and Southeast Asia's 11-14% of FDI outflows since 1985 (\$ 8.1 bn in 1989-90) and nearly one-third share (8 74 bn) of Japanese imports.

This brief discussion brings us back to the question: how does India, after a year of economic reform and the Rao government, look from Japan's vantage point and what are the prospects for the future of the relationship? The first point to be noted is that the June 1992 Rao visit cannot be assessed only in the traditional economic terms of how much aid and investment has been committed, etcetera. For Japan is emerging as a world political actor with politically conditional aid as a diplomatic instrument. In this context, what is significant is the beginning of a political dialogue between the two countries on major issues and on where they see themselves headed and how they can be of help to each other's plans for the future.

In purely economic terms the visit and the parallel meeting of the Standing Committee of the Indo-Japan Business Cooperation Committees was nothing spectacular. Japan hiked its aid by \$ 50 to \$ 850 m, but unlike earlier indications in April at the time of the Finance Minister's visit, sanctioned only \$ 250 m of fast-disbursing aid as against the requested \$ 500 m, arguing that India's reserves position had improved. The Japan Bond Research Institute was the

first international credit rating agency to take India off creditwatch, although its rating remains in the non-investment (speculative) grade.

The major investment proposal approved so far has been the \$ 350 m C. Itoh-Reliance petrochemical venture. It follows the \$ 150 m Fujitsu digital switching venture earlier this year. Despite the PM's meetings with a few CEOs, no major new investment flows are on the cards at the moment. The Japanese will continue to wait and watch to see if the economic reform process continues in a satisfactory way. The Ishikawa and Yamashita mission reports have by and large praised the Rao government's liberalization—most of the 21 points made by the Ishikawa mission in January 1992 have been met-but have stressed that much more needs to be done before India becomes an attractive destination for investment. It is also stressed that attractiveness is always relative in a changing world.

Specifically, labour laws need to be made flexible, the infrastructure needs drastic improvement, deregulation has to be implemented down to the nitty-gritty, tariffs need to be lowered and living conditions and amenities for expatriate Japanese nationals need to be improved. In addition, Japanese CEOs are strongly influenced by signals emanating from existing Japanese ventures in India. Despite Maruti and Asahi Glass doing well and raising their stakes to 51%, most ventures, especially in light commercial vehicles, are not doing well. And Japanese expatriates and visitors continue to give negative reports.

This poor image factor combined with poor infrastructure is also the reason why India, despite flogging the Buddhist heritage, got only about 0.5% of the 11 million Japanese travellers abroad in 1991, more of whom visit North America (including Hawaii) and Western Europe than Asia despite the latter's proximity. It is also bad luck that India's liberalization coincides with the Japanese economic downturn and slowdown in foreign investment.

However, the difference is that the Japanese are looking beyond the periphery of ASEAN and India (and South Asia) is being 'considered' where earlier it was not. Also, relations are being broadened from the narrowly economic. Japan has said that it wants India to sign the NPT; that would be 'helpful' in improving relations and aid prospects. Japan is neutral on India's disputes with Pakistan and China and is no longer worried about India's relations with Russia and the CIS unlike earlier.

Prime Minister Rao, in turn, seemed to make a slightly different statement on NPT on his visit in that he talked of the treaty's renewal coming up in 1995, mentioned for the first time, seeming to indicate that signing the NPT was not totally ruled out provided Indian objectives were met. Apparently it was to show that India cared enough about Japanese concerns and interests, which incidentally are strongly pro-disarmament and favour a world order in which economics has primacy.

In the event, India agreed to engage in informal bilateral talks on the issue. Japan is only the second country after the US that India has agreed to talk to bilaterally on the NPT. This may lead to a dialogue on larger issues such as the role of the UN, the security arrangement for the Western Pacific, Southeast and South Asia in the new world order, etcetera. Japan, incidentally, will not discuss the UN Security Council with India as it already has President Bush's support and is in a different league in terms of acceptability to the P-5 powers compared to India.

The recent increase in Japanese interest in South Asia is also indicated by the Japanese government-backed Japan South Asia Forum set up last year to promote study and exchanges. This seems to indicate a very long-term vision to bring South Asia into the orbit of a Japan-centred, economically integrated, politically stabilized and reordered Western Pacific region. The Japanese seem to be hoping that SAARC will eventually develop along the lines of ASEAN.

To sum up, we are at a point when relations are being broadened to include the political dimension as both countries try to come to terms with the evolving new world order. From the point of view of Indian foreign policy, Japan represents an enormous potential source of aid, investment, loans, advanced technology and global market access. And if creatively handled, this may come without the kind of political strings that would compromise Indian sovereignty, foreign policy autonomy and vital defence capabilities despite Japan being firmly a part of the G-7 camp and a US ally. A relationship with Japan based on some degree of sensitivity to Japanese concerns and serious attempts at conflict resolution in South Asia, can help support the economic restructuring process towards an efficient, competitive and fast-growing economy.

On the Indian side, studies of and dialogue with Japan should concentrate on four broad issue areas. First, on how to attract Japanese investment and penetrate the Japanese market, including developing a thorough understanding of Japanese management and finance. Second, exploring Japanese intentions towards the future political, security and economic arrangements in the Southeast Asian region from Myanmar to Australasia, focusing on the role of China, with a view to assessing how it ties in with Indian interests.

Third, learning from the Japanese and related East Asian experiences in market-friendly state intervention and long-range planning, especially how to manage structural transitions and how to combine social sector and human resource investment with a market-driven economy. And fourth, larger/world order issues such as the NPT, reform of the UN system, global environmental issues, etcetera. Whether a mutually beneficial relationship with Japan expands and grows depends a great deal on India's domestic, economic and foreign policies and the effort invested in studying Japan in all its facets.

E SRIDHARAN

# Still a distant country

TAKAKO HIROSE

THE current year is the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relationship between Japan and India and, incidentally, it is Japan's 20th anniversary with China. A number of exchange programmes to celebrate the anniversary are being planned and implemented, the Indian Prime Minister's recent visit to Japan being part of them.

Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's visit from 22 to 26 June was successful in the sense that it served some immediate purposes. In his meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa, Rao made clear position concerning the India's Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Both Prime Ministers agreed that Japan and India, would begin bilateral talks on the nuclear issue at a working level. Miyazawa also pledged that Japan would extend 112 billion yen (about US \$ 900 million) in loans during the current fiscal year for development projects and provide \$ 500,000 through a un organization to help preserve religious assets in India. In their detailed discussion, Japanese Minister of International Trade and Industry (MITI) Watanabe, also responded favourably to Rao's requests for improving the conditions for trade with India. But to what extent Japanese business interest has been enhanced, is difficult to say at this stage.

However, Rao's visit was not too successful in raising public interest in India among the Japanese at large. There was very little news coverage in the Japanese mass media. Hardly any evening news programmes broadcast the Indian Prime Minister's arrival in Japan. Rao's interview was broadcast for only five minutes in a late-night programme of the

NHK (Japan Broadcasting Bureau). The NPT issue drew some attention, but this was largely due to the strong anxiety over the nuclear problem among the Japanese public. The economic issue was covered by Nikkei Shimbun (the Japanese Economic Times) but was hardly visible in other papers. Those who have been closely watching Indian affairs were disappointed by the indifference displayed by the Japanese media.

In the eyes of many Japanese. India is still a distant country, more distant psychologically than geographically. However, this does not mean that we cannot expect a mutually beneficial relationship in the future. The recent trend shows some positive signs. Japanese government officials, businessmen and academics seem to show a much greater interest in India than they did a year ago. Various committees have been set up to work on the bilateral relationship between the two countries. the relationship between Japan and SAARC and Japan's overall Asia policy. During the cold war era, Japan was able to comfortably confine its role to being a loyal partner of the US. But those days are gone. It is now trying to find a new identity and a new role in Asia.

In such an environment, a closer tie is bound to emerge between the two big Asian powers. However, some obstacles stand in our way. The present article has been written primarily to discuss the main areas of cooperation between the two countries: economic, cultural and political. I have also tried to analyze, from a Japanese point of view, some barriers and obstacles that we face. It must be made clear here, that the fluidity of the situation does not allow even a highly homogeneous nation like Japan to hold a con-

sensus view either on the present or the future relationship with India. What follows, therefore, is purely my personal view and does not represent an official view or the national consensus.

he end of the cold war forced all the nations in the world to readjust their strategy, although the rivalry between the two superpowers has left a legacy of hatred and bloody conflicts in various parts of the world. The degree of the impact of the withdrawal of the superpowers differs from region to region. There has been a gradual disengagement of the surviving superpower, the US, from East and Southeast Asia. Consequently, a new Asia-Pacific order is being sought in the eastern part of Asia, in which the US still has an important role to play. On the other hand, the change in strategic positions in South Asia has been much more drastic. The traditional close ties between Pakistan and the US on the one hand and India and the Soviet Union on the other, have come to an abrupt end. The situation in the Indian subcontinent is characterized to a large extent by uncertainty and fluidity, at least in the perception of many Japanese observers.

A global trend that has resulted from the ending of the cold war is the emergence of regional economic blocs. A striking example is the European Community, which might possibly absorb Central and Eastern European countries in the wake of their democratization and the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is also conceivable that the US, plagued by its long economic recession, will consolidate the unity of the American continents for its own survival. Under such circumstances, it is only natural that Asia should try to strengthen regional ties, and if that happens, India and Japan along with China are expected to play pivotal roles in determining the future of Asia.

However, the logic does not work that way. The increase in cooperation between the two countries has been far less than people, especially Indians, expected. Bigger obstacles seem to lie on the Japanese side. Despite the global change and the favourable conditions set by India, Japan has been rather slow in responding to India's invitation for more active participation.

Japan's relationship with India has so far been confined to the economic and, to a lesser degree, cultural fields. The total financial flows consisting of Official Development Aid (ODA), Other Official Flows (OOF) and Private Flows (PF) from Japan to India increased from US \$ 67.6 million in 1985 to \$ 514.4 m. in 1990, with its share in the whole developing world rising from 0.58% to 3.2% in the same period. The increase was not confined to India alone. The financial flows to the seven SAARC member countries also increased from \$462.4 m. to \$ 1,449.1 m. during the same period. India took up 1.3% of Japan's total ODA (the SAARC countries altogether: 12.9%) and 2.2% of Asia in 1990. Looked at from the other end, Japan came top among the DAC countries to India in the late 1980s. Japan's share was 24.87% in 1985, which went up to 46.7% in 1988, though it declined to 22.7% in 1989. On the other hand, private investment from Japan has been minimal. The actual investment in 1991 was \$ 14 million, which did not reach even 0.1% of the total Japanese investment abroad.

Nowever, the Narasimha Rao government's new economic policy has drawn considerable attention from Japanese investors. According to Indian official sources, the number of cases of the Japanese private investment which the Indian government approved during the period August 1991 to June 1992 was over 3,000, amounting to 8 690 million, 15 times that in the same period of the previous year, though still just over 1/20th of Japanese investment in China in 1991. What proportion of the commitment will actually materialize is yet to be seen.

India's export to Japan in 1991 was \$2,190.4 million, an increase by 5.6% from the previous year, whereas its import from Japan in the same year was \$1,523 million, a decrease of 10.8% in a year. This is a desirable trend in view of the balance of payments situation in both countries. The amount of trade

between Japan and India from the Japanese point of view, however, has been negligible so far. Even this has decreased. India's share in Japan's total trade was only 0.7% in 1990, a decline from 1.5% in 1970 and 1.0% in 1986. This is against the general trend of the increasing importance of Asia, whose share increased from 26.0% in 1986 to 31.1% in 1990. Thus, apart from ODA, the economic relations between the two countries have been, as far as Japan is concerned, far below the potential level which favourable conditions could raise.

L here are many positive factors which could facilitate a closer relationship between India and Japan. Firstly, Japan has no political or military aspirations in the region and its interest is strictly confined to the economic field. Secondly, unlike East and Southeast Asia, South Asia does not have the horrible wartime memory of Japan. Therefore, India and Japan could make a fresh start without any hangovers from the past. Thirdly, there seems to be a good image of Japan in India not only as an economic giant but also as an Asian nation which has preserved its own culture and tradition despite a high level of modernization. Its 'work culture' has proved to work in India, as shown in the case of the Maruti factory. Fourthly, Japanese economic strength and high technology is needed for India's new economic policy. And lastly, the vast market of India attracts Japan enormously, especially now that Japan is facing difficulties and suffering 'Japan bashing' elsewhere. Thus there is a good potential for cooperation.

India and Japan, however, have not reached this potential level despite such encouraging factors. Historically, some strong barriers and obstacles have stood in their way. The barriers can be divided into three categories: economic, cultural and political. For over three decades after independence, India closed its market to foreign investors. Its restrictive measures and tedious administrative procedures have long prevented Japanese investment as well as bilateral trade from augmenting. It was only in the 1980s that India embarked on a liberalization policy, thus offering opportunities to ambitious businessmen abroad. Still, it took nearly a decade for the liberalization policy initiated by Indira Gandhi to take shape.

The bold measures for restructuring the Indian economy taken by the Narasimha Rao government and the Prime Minister's repeated assurance that the course is 'irreversible' are highly appreciated by the Japanese government as well as businessmen. Most of the old barriers have been removed now. However, the Japanese have not jumped at the opportunities newly opened to for-eign investors, and have instead adopted a 'wait and watch' attitude. Japanese investment is expected to increase gradually but steadily, by balancing India with other new markets, such as China, Vietnam, Russia and Eastern and Central European countries.

L here are also psychological barriers or cultural differences. Many Japanese—barring a handful of people who have been deeply involved in Indian affairs, either business, academic or cultural—view India as a distant, different and difficult country. Distant in the sense that beyond the Arakan Yoma (in Myanmar) is an 'outer' world. The Japanese have felt a strong affinity with China, and to a lesser degree with Korea, because of their historical and cultural ties. Many Japanese also feel quite at home in Southeast Asia. But South Asia has been beyond its traditional sphere of interest except at wartime.

There are behavioural differences as well. The Indians talk 120% of what they think whereas the Japanese feel that it is best to understand each other without saying too much. Such differences in attitude make it difficult for the Japanese to deal with Indians. Indians are very good at talking but, unfortunately, are not very generous listeners. The language handicap, which the Japanese have always suffered from, is not the only reason. To make matters worse, what the Indians say is very logical, often too logical, and makes sense. There is no way the Japanese can compete with such talented people! As a result, they get frustrated and withdraw into a shell,

giving the impression that the Japanese are an insular people.

However, there is no use complaining about cultural differences. It should be sufficient just to recognize them. In fact, different values and attitudes are often used as an excuse for the lack of effort on both sides. The distance between Japan and the Western countries may be wider, but greater efforts have been made to fill the gap, or at least to understand each other. Why not with India then? Here a third factor comes into play: the political importance of India to Japan. But before going into the Indo-Japanese political relationship, we must know how Japanese foreign policy is made.

Over the last four decades Japan has been very reluctant to change its original post-war foreign policy laid down by the late Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida at the time of concluding the San Francisco Peace Treaty. The idea of Yoshida's policy was that, while depending for its defence on the US, Japan should concentrate its efforts on economic development. In other words, Japan was willing to accept a patron-client relationship and play its role in such a relationship. Thereafter, Japan has tried to be as loyal as possible to the US under the given circumstances.

Ver time, some diversions have been necessary. When the US government announced that President Nixon would visit China, the Japanese government was greatly shocked. Japan had always followed US policy, and yet the US made such a significant decision without consulting Japan. This policy, together with the devaluation of the US dollar, was received by the Japanese as the 'Nixon Shock'. But instead of blaming the US, Japan was quick in adjusting its policy. Prime Minister Kakuci Tanaka, who had succeeded Sato known in China as a Japanese militarist', visited China and normalized relations even before the US could intercede. On the whole, Japan has shown remarkable adaptability in its foreign policy in the post-war period, though not much imagination or initiative. Unlike India, which refuses to surrender to external powers, Japan has been

highly vulnerable to external pressures.

Japan's basic foreign policy still remains largely unchanged, even though the world has entered a new era. It would be misleading to assume, therefore, that Japan is trying to maintain a distance from its patron and take an independent policy initiative. On the contrary, the US still occupies priority number one in Japan's external affairs and every effort is being made to retain a friendly relationship. Only recently has the Japanese government begun to criticize US protectionism. The first-ever 'Report on Unfair Trade Policies by Major Trading Partners' submitted by an advisory body to MITT on 8 June, placed the US at the top of the list of unfair traders.

L he US has been by far the biggest trade partner of Japan throughout the post-war period. It took up 33.6% of the total export from Japan and 22.9% of Japan's import in 1990. In terms of private investment also, the US has been very important, having acquired 42.2% of the total Japanese investment abroad from 1951 to 1991. These figures abundantly illustrate the high priority accorded to the US. Moreover, because the US helped bring about Japan's post-war reforms during the Occupation period — democratization, new constitution and economic rehabilitation—even today, many Japanese feel greatly indebted to it. Now that the US is going through difficult times, it is Japan's turn to return the favour. Indians might point out the hard reality, and I quite agree, that the US policy towards Japan was based on their own national interest in the overall cold war strategy. But this does not usually occur to the Japanese.

All this does not mean, however, that Japan is insensitive to the changes in its environment. Japan is well aware of the new role assigned to it as a global economic power. Its overseas development assistance increased on a bilateral basis from \$2.43 billion in 1985 to \$6.94 billion in 1990. The total amount of ODA, including the contributions to international organizations, increased in dollar terms by 20% from \$9.2 billion in 1990 to \$11 billion in 1991. Aid accounted for 0.32% of the GNP

in 1991 and is expected to further increase under international pressure.

Japan will continue to be one of the worlds largest donor countries, especially to Asia. Japanese, political leaders are also beginning to seriously consider Asian cooperation. Prime Minister Miyazawa recently set up a special advisory committee to work on Japan's Asia policy. The country's financial contribution to the multinational military operation during the Gulf War in 1991 amounted to US \$11 billion. Its participation in the UN peace keeping operation, which resulted in heated debates and fierce controversy in the National Diet in June, is one of the main election issues now.

I we points should be made here. Firstly, the effort to search for a new role in Asia is being made mainly at an official level. People at large are indifferent to the foreign policy or the role of their country. Young people are the least interested, refusing to think or talk about politics altogether. Secondly, the review of Japanese foreign policy is taking place largely due to external pressures. Therefore, Japan is willing to play its part in the development of the third world countries and in maintaining stability in global politics, but not at the cost of its friendly relationship with the US and, to a lesser degree, with Europe. A drastic policy change is unlikely to occur in Japan.

The Japanese held India in high esteem in the 1940's and 1950's. India's freedom struggle, which was largely non-violent, had impressed many Japanese, and the role played by Justice Pal at the Tokyo International Military Tribunal was widely appreciated in Japan. People still remember the elephant named Indira which was given to the country by Nehru when he visited the country in 1957. Unfortunately, however, Japanese interest in India has gradually declined and, in the process, South Asia has been replaced by Southeast Asia. In the 1990s, when talking about 'Asia' or 'the Asia-Pacific region', most Japanese refer to East and Southeast Asia. Just a week after Narasimha Rao left Japan, Prime Minister Miyazawa proposed at the National Press Club in Washington that Asian security should be promoted by utilizing existing forums like the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference and APEC and that in the future 'a framework for political dialogue' should be established with active participation by China and Russia. But he did not mention India.

Behind the shift in Japanese interest from South Asia to Southeast Asia is the perception of the former as a conflict-ridden region. Ethnic and religious conflicts are considered especially problematic by the Japanese who have hardly witnessed any conflicts of this sort within the country. To what extent this image of unstable India reflects the reality is quite a different matter. In fact, the Japanese who are knowledgeable about Indian affairs, have a high opinion of the democratic set-up which India has maintained for over four decades and the resilience with which India has dealt with crisis situations.

This positive aspect of Indian politics is, however, not generally known in Japan. Instead, news of assassinations, communal violence, scandals and sporadic fire exchanges with Pakistan incline the Japanese towards the view that India is a highly unstable country. People often wonder why there is so much violence and why so many people get killed in a country once known for its non-violence.

L his image is augmented by the country's military build-up, especially of the navy. The three wars with Pakistan have compelled India to strengthen its defence forces, and another war with China has forced India to direct its attention beyond its region. In this context, India's military build-up might be justified. But wasn't it India itself that taught the world, through Nehru's nonalignment policy, that security is not brought about by military power alone? Many Japanese regret that this aspect of the non-alignment policy has been forgotten and independence in making foreign policy (not surrendering to external pressures) is often over emphasized.

India's SAARC policy has proved rather disappointing to the Japanese,

especially the Ministry of External Affairs (Gaimusho). Having seen ASEAN solving territorial and other problems within the framework of regional cooperation, the Japanese naturally expect SAARC to play a similar role. But India's reluctance to develop saarc, it seems to the Japanese, prevents it from taking on this role. They firmly believe that it is India, with its size and power, that will largely determine the future of South Asia and SAARC. Bilateralism is fine as long as it can solve problems. Strengthening ties with ASEAN and APEC would be welcome once India has firmly established a peaceful atmosphere in South Asia.

South Asia as a whole comprises a loose continuation of one culture. On an individual basis, the cultural closeness helps people to understand each other and brings them together into a large 'extended family'. People from different countries often speak the same language, share caste identity or religion, which can never happen in a country like Japan. Perhaps it is for this reason that the state-to-state relationships become so hostile, especially between India and Pakistan. In his speech at the farewell party hosted by his counterpart from Pakistan, the Indian Ambassador to Japan, Arjun Asrani recalled that some 40 years ago in Karachi, he had said, 'Give us (India and Pakistan) fifty years. We must first get used to being separated.' Forty-five years have already passed.

India is very popular among the young Japanese. Many visit India every year. But they prefer to stay in unnecessarily cheap hotels in order to 'experience India': Rs. 10 per night! In contrast, businessmen expect the same comfort as or more comfort than in Japan; deluxe fivestar hotels: Rs. 4,000 per nightl Japanese television companies are determined to make documentary films on caste and 'untrodden' tribals, but not on modern India. The Japanese therefore, need to acquire a more realistic view of India. The Indians, on the other hand, can put some more effort to create a peaceful, non-violent nation and neighbourhood. This would open up unlimited possibilities for cementing relations between us.

# Opening moves

**BRIJ TANKHA** 

JAPAN has come to assume a far reaching importance for India in the last few years. The realization that among the industrially developed countries Japan has the largest investible reserves and the prospect of attracting a portion of this to fuel Indian economic development has turned the attention of policymakers, as well as concerned public opinion, towards Japan. This cannot be said equally for the Japanese for whom India remains a marginal and even forgettable country. India is not important for Japan as China or Malayasia. In the present volatility with political formations dissolving and reforming and problems long held in abeyance calling for solution, the exercise of a diplomacy based on principles and a vision of the future, always important, has become imperative.

Do Japan and India, then, have the possibility of a closer interaction and can this be more than investment and trade? Or to put it in another way, can the two countries really strengthen economic relations without a shared political vision of the future trajectory of this troubled world? In this article I would like to address myself to the question of Japan's perception of its position in the world and the role it hopes to

play and tangentially approach the question of India-Japan relations by discussing the context within which these relations must be structured.

The question of Japan's international role has not been settled for all times and is still a matter of extensive debate. But certain broad trends are clearly visible and, inspite of continuing opposition, Japanese government policy has set a course which will be hard to alter in any meaningful way. I will focus on this position rather than consider the various debates and alternatives being offered, though they are also of great importance and should be considered separately.

The arc of Japan's modern history, since the middle of the 19th century, has been characterized by a concern for achieving economic and military parity with the developed West. In the pursuit of this objective it sought to galvanize the population and attenuate debate by a sense of crisis, of a feeling that Japan was beset by international dangers and the only way to successfully meet and surmount these problems was to unite under the leadership of the government. In this project Asia was at times seen as a vital ally and at times as a vast resource base. It was

thought that by dominating Asia, Japan could control sufficient resources and populations to challenge the West.

The details of this drive which collapsed in World War II need not detain us but the point to note is that Asia has traditionally occupied a secondary position in Japan's official or dominant world-view in the modern period. Moreover, Japan was able to build a homogeneous world-view among its citizenry which linked their interests and aspirations to national effort and severely curtailed and restricted debate. Sections of the intelligentsia, political formations and other groups have articulated alternative approaches and, for many of them, in these views, Asian countries were seen as integrally linked to Japan, not just because of a shared cultural past, but because of a common vision of the future.

Defeat in war and the subsequent occupation by the United States, (though formally it was an occupation by the allied forces), linked Japan through a military pact with the United States alliance system which has formed the bedrock of Japanese policies. This alliance and dependence on US nuclear protection was never seen to contradict the post-war 'peace' constitution, also drafted by the United States. Japan's quest for economic development was made possible by this alliance, aswell as by a sophisticated system of state control of the economy.

Unlike many other planned economies, Japanese controls were responsive to business interests and formulated in concert with them rather than in opposition to them or with the objectives of equitable distribution which could come into conflict with growth targets. Growth was the prime objective. Needless to say, Japan was not an underdeveloped economy at the end of the war but one which had suffered physical destruction.

The decade of the 1970s marked the emergence of Japan as a 'Westernized industrialized democracy', as it perceived itself and in 1975 she participated in the summit of industrialized nations. Increasing economic interaction and participation in international institutions led to political participation, though in a low key. Japan participated in the sanctions against Afghanistan in 1979 and by 1983, the then Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone was talking at Williamsburg of 'shared Western perceptions'.

L he 1970s and 1980s were marked by Japan's achievement of a Western' status. Her economic, political, and security concerns were firmly linked with the United States and Western Europe. Socially and culturally, public and media interest in Japan was largely with things Western. Academics as well as populizers argued that Japan was not an Asian society but more akin to European societies in terms of historical development, cultural and social values. Echoing Fukuzawa Yukichi, an early Meiji intellectual, the public saw Japan as the skyscraper in the dump (read Asia), Asia, was at best a tourist resort of exotic food and idyllic beaches.

Yet Japan's economic involvement in East and Southeast Asia and increasing trade friction with the United States worked to make Asia an area of concern for Japan. In the Houston summit the then Prime Minister Toshihiki Kaifu put forward the view of Japan as the leader of Asia. He talked of an 'era in which other countries respect Japan's decisions on issues in the Asia-Pacific region when they are made with Japan's own judgement and on its own responsibility'. Japan, he said, seeks to secure policy coordination on international issues in the Asia-Pacific region'.

Japan's economic strength and involvement in the regional economies, trade friction and the prospect of a world divided into trading blocs as well as a desire to articulate a Japanese foreign policy were responsible for these statements. The basic thrust of various statements made by Japanese prime ministers in the 1990s has been of practising a foreign policy which strengthens peace, ensures development by reducing military conflict and spreading an open market system. Japan can provide financial and technological assistance to realize these objectives

and because of this Japan can help to mediate regional conflicts and broker peace.

Japan's involvement in the Cambodia peace negotiations is a major example of this as is the bill to allow the government to dispatch a peace keeping force. However, the debate over the bill also reflects the ambiguities and constraints under which Japan operates and which will hamper Japan's active involvement in international politics.

The question of dispatching a peace keeping force to work in United Nations peace keeping operations arose after the Gulf War when. Japan was criticized by its Western allies for being both tardy with financial contributions and for contributing 'only money'. The ruling Liberal-Democratic Party attempted to steer a bill which would allow Self Defence Forces (SDF) to send a unit overseas as this was not allowed under the existing law. This provoked widespread opposition within Japan and fear and concern among its neighbours, particularly South Korea. Opposition groups within Japan feared this as the thin end of the wedge which would gradually allow Japanese defense forces to expand their role and raised apprehension that they might regain their pre-war position and dominate political life. Japan's neighbours recalled her military occupation before and during World War II.

In other respects the debate was largely constitutional, that is, whether it was legally permissible to send troops, should they be armed, can they be in zones of armed conflict, etcetera. The constitutional question of the legality of Japan's SDF has still not been clearly settled. It is now commonly accepted that Japan has the right to maintain forces to defend itself and gradually the SDF has also come to win greater public support. However, the constitutional position remains ambiguous.

Former Prime Minister Nakasone had attempted during his stewardship to settle these questions but was unable to as any proposed change in the constitution to delete Article 9 or alter it is seen as a rightist

challenge and a sure road to military revival. That said, the problem with the peace keeping bill has another and, for the region, a more serious implication. The bill was a reaction to United States' and European criticism about Japan's inactivity rather than a part of an attempt to evolve a comprehensive policy towards the region.

Inspite of a plethora of arguments for a new philosophy, Japan's foreign policy continues to be anchored by the United States' alliance. It is also a foreign policy which is premised on the understanding that Japan's economic strength can influence other countries' decisions. Politics is therefore underplayed. Japan's inability to resolve the dispute over the Northern Territories, earlier with the Soviet Union and now with Russia, is a clear example of this. Japan has had to modify its position and seek the help of its Western allies.

Japan's situation points to an urgent need to articulate and practice a policy which addresses the problems it is confronting. Contemporary fears and concerns indicate an increasing desire for a more independent regional role. The crucial area for Japan is China. Chinese developments impinge directly on Japan and social and political chaos of the order of the Commonwealth of Independent States is a Japanese policy-maker's nightmare. Attracted by the higher wages, Chinese students and workers are already coming in large numbers to Japan and illegal crossings are increasing. The prospect of large-scale movement of refugees is not something that they can contemplate with equanimity.

The problem of migrant workers is not confined to China but spans all of Asia, from the bar hostesses from the Philippines and Thailand to Iranian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Israeli workers. Compared to many countries, immigrants in Japan are not in such large numbers but the fear of social disruption has sharply increased. Foreigners bring different values, crime increases and the incidence of AIDS is rising: that is how many Japanese feel. Consequently, stricter immigration controls on Asians and the development

of these economies so that people do not need to migrate, have become policy objectives.

On the one hand, then, Japan has firmly established itself as part of the US and EC and its concerns are consequently global. On the other hand it sees its long-term strength in Asia. At the same time it is also acutely aware of the threats that instability in Asia can pose to the economic and social well-being of Japan.

In this accounting of Japan's preoccupations, India does not figure prominently. Inspite of its early recognition of Japan, India was never able to develop strong bilateral ties. In the aftermath of the war, Justice Pal's dissenting opinion contesting the legality of war crimes in the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal increased goodwill for India as did the Indian government's stand on the San Francisco Treaty. But this goodwill was never translated into policy. The reason for this is not merely 'lack of interest' but rather the diametrically opposed positions that India and Japan occupied in their diplomatic ideals and practice.

The two countries—geographically separated and ideologically far removed—could not have found a common platform to work from till two crucial changes took place. One, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the accompanying loosening of traditional supports and the consequent search for new friends and allies. Two, a growing realization in the United States that India could play a vital role in the region. Japan is, it must be remembered, still a close US ally and the road to friendly ties with Tokyo goes through Washington D.C.

India has begun to be of interest to the Japanese because of the changes in economic policy which the government of P.V. Narasimha Rao has instituted. But while these measures have been highly evaluated by Japanese business circles, the major stumbling block, observers argue, still remains one of long-term political stability and the distance of consciousness, as deputy president Ken Tijima of the Sakura Research Institute calls it.

It is true that knowledge of India is limited and media coverage scanty. If, however, Japanese investments in other areas are considered, the picture that emerges is somewhat different. Neither general know-ledge of the country nor familiarity with its culture and language have been crucial to attracting Japanese investments. Political systems also do not matter a great deal. Rather. it would seem that less than democratic countries have been quite successful. Japan has managed to find appropriate areas within its hinterland where the administrative response has been extremely fayourable, profit ratios are high and labour controllable.

India today offers Japanese business a possible area of expansion but so does China and Vietnam. China certainly has been successful in attracting foreign capital. However, while business considerations will continue to determine Japanese policy, they have become acutely alive to political problems, particularly within the region which will affect them in complex ways. India and Japan could find common ground in acting together to resolve regional issues and encourage the democratization process in countries such as Burma or Thailand. Japan on her own is still hampered by the deepseated suspicion of her Asian neighbours. But with India there is no such rancour from the past. Moreover, the Indian government has little reservation about Japan's more active involvement.

In the Japanese establishment India is still a marginal area but it is beginning to assume some importance. Business circles are definitely interested and what they think is reflected soon enough in political circles. Given the fluid situation in Asia, Japan will need to establish links and build ties if it is to play a leadership role. It has yet to show that it is willing to take that burden. But given its past history and the rancour that remains it cannot move with undue speed. India and Japan have just begun a dialogue which will grow, slowly perhaps, but still prove of great importance not only for bilateral relations but for the region as well.

# Attracting investments

BADAR A. IQBĀL

FOREIGN trade and foreign direct investment have much in common as they are market responses to opportunities arising due to the differences in the production capabilities of various countries. This means that both activities serve the same purpose. However, the question remains: what are the conditions under which foreign direct investment takes place? The 'eclectic' theory of foreign direct investment may shed some light on this.¹ According to this

1. Dunning, J.D. International Production and the Multinational Enterprise, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982 and Dunning, J.D. Wetwirtschaftliches Archiv, Vol. 117, 1981, pp. 30-64.

theory, there are three basic sets of forces which determine the level and pattern of foreign direct investment. Firstly, foreign firms should have an edge in regard to ownership over their rivals in the host country. Secontly, the host nation must have locational advantage in respect of serving the local market or as an export base. Thirdly, there must be a sense of internalization which would encourage a firm to select direct investment over other kinds of arrangements like, for instance, production licensing.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2.</sup> Isaiah, F. Foreign Enterprise in Developing Countries. Baltimore: JHUP, 1980.

high as 47%, followed by South East Asian Economies (ASEAN) with 46%. These two blocs have been recipients of 93% of the total Japanese FDI during the last 37 years as against the 0.9% share of South Asian economies.<sup>5</sup>

TABLE

Trends in Japanese FDI in Asia 1951-1989

| Región/     | Amount US8 | % to  |
|-------------|------------|-------|
| country     | million    | total |
| NIEs        | 15,018     | 46.8  |
| Hong Kong   | 6,167      | 19.2  |
| South Korea | 3,248      | 10.1  |
| Singapore   | 3,812      | 11.9  |
| Taiwan      | 1,791      | 5.6   |
| ASEAN       | 14,750     | 46.0  |
| Indonesia   | 9,804      | 30.6  |
| Malaysia    | 1,834      | 5.7   |
| Philippines | 1,120      | 3.5   |
| Thailand    | 1,992      | 6.2   |
| SAARC       | 270        | 0.9   |
| Bangladesh  | 11         | -     |
| India       | 148        | 0.5   |
| Pakistan    | 18         | 0.1   |
| Sri Lanka   | 93         | 0.3   |
| China       | 2,036      | 6.3   |

Source: Ministry of Finance, Government of Japan, Tokyo, 25 February 1990.

L he table also brings to light some revealing facts about Japanese FDI flows to different regions/countries in Asia. First, there have been wide disparities—regional inter-regional and intra-regional—in the flow of Japanese investments as far as the Asian continent is concerned. Second, there has been a higher degree of concentration in a few countries in Asia: Hong Kong in the NIEs, Indonesia in ASEAN, China in East Asia. In SAARC, India has been the largest recipient during the last 37 years. Third, the Japanese government has not adopted a balancing approach in regard to the geographical distribution of its FDI in the Asian continent.

Why have these trends persisted in Japan's flows of FDI into the Asian

Three broad-based types of foreign

Over the last few years, Japanese investment in different parts of the world has become alarmingly significant and formidable. In a recent issue, The Washington Post stated that Japan has now produced an economy that is expanding its global reach while attaining new heights of industrial success at home. The 'explosion of Japanese foreign direct investment' is one of the most remarkable stories of the late 1980s.<sup>3</sup>

Japan recorded a phenomenal rate of growth in its FDI during the last decade, particularly in the latter half of the 1980s. From 1986 to 1989, Japanese global foreign direct investment registered an average growth of 54% annually. The amount invested overseas in the same period stood at US \$ 102.76 billion and was double that invested during the previous 34 years, i.e., from 1951 to 1985.

In the year 1990 (up to March) Japanese investment in Germany more than doubled, standing at US \$ 1.1 billion. However, the capital flow in other directions actually fell to US \$ 144 billion.

The recently growing cohesive regional economies of North America and Europe are now forcing Japan to take a hard look at its relations with Asian economies. Between 1986 and 1989, North America accounted for 46.4% of total Japanese FDI, followed by Europe with 20.1% and Latin America constituting 14%. These three regions alone

formed a share as high as 80.5% of

the total, indicating a high degree

of Japanese FDI concentration in the

area. In contrast, the share that

went to Africa was as low as 1.1%,

showing the extremes in ranking the

largest and the lowest shares in total

Japanese FDI between 1986 and 1989.

South Asia in general and India in

particular have also been sailing in

After five years of phenomenal

increase, Japanese FDI went down in 1990, affecting its flow to Europe and, to some extent, to the Latin American economies. However, the

situation in Asian economies is a

mixed one. Japanese companies are

seemingly favouring Hong Kong,

Malaysia and Indonesia, while res-

training the flow to South Asian

economies, particularly India and Pakistan. Japan has also cut down

its investments in South Korea and

Singapore, where costs have been

spiralling these days, together with

the appreciation in their currencies.

According to the latest data pub-

lished by the Japanese Ministry of

Finance (MOF), Japanese FDI in the

first six months of 1990 (March to

September) declined by 11% or by

US § 27.7 billion. It is pertinent to note that this decrease is the first

ever since 1986, and it is estimated that the figure for the full year

would be around US \$ 67.5 billion (10%). North America recorded a

decrease of 3.4% while Europe re-

corded a decline as high as 16%

during the first six months of 1990.

The Asian continent also registered

a decrease of more than 10% in the

same period, due to the alarming

decline in Japanese FDI in South

Asian economies, particularly India.

trends in Asia. Japan is the richest

nation in Asia and has emerged as

the largest source of foreign direct

investment in the region. The follow-

ing table shows the trends in the geo-

Let us now examine Japanese FDI

the same boat.

the New Industrialized Economies (NIEs) have been the largest receivers of Japanese FDI between 1951 and 1988. Their share has been as

direct investment can be identified: natural resource investment, investment to save the host nation's market and export-oriented investment. The Japanese have shown themselves partial to natural resource and export-oriented investments. In the Asian continent East Asia has benefited the most from foreign investments over the last two decades. In this respect, the flow of Japanese direct investment into East Asia is of paramount significance.

<sup>3.</sup> Iqbal, B.A. 'Japanese FDI: New Emerging Scenario', Monthly Commentary, New Delhi: IIPO, January 1992, pp. 9-11.

graphical distribution of Japanese FDI in Asia. According to this table, the New Industrialized Economies

<sup>4.</sup> Annual Reports, Ministry of Finance, Tokyo, 1990.

<sup>5.</sup> Ministry of Finance, Government of Japan, Tokyo, 25 February 1990.

continent? The NIEs have been the largest receivers because Japanese firms have the advantage of ownership. ASEAN has also claimed a major share due to the availability of cheap labour for export manufacturing; in addition, it has the advantage of having an abundant supply of natural resources. China has an edge over other countries in that it has a larger market. In fact, in the matter of receiving Japanese FDI, during the last 37 years China has outpaced many economies of the NIEs (South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan), ASEAN (Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand) and saarc (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka). In spite of the larger market it offers, SAARC did not receive any significant amount of Japanese investments between 1951 and 1989. This was due to the regulated structure of SAARC economies in the context of foreign direct investment, foreign trade and business environment.

It is clear, then, that economic prosperity has come to the NIEs and ASRAN economies due to increasing foreign direct investments. These facilitate movement up the ladder of comparative advantage, both in the investing countries, whose resources are free to move into more capital-intensive activities, as well as in the host economies, whose industrial employment and nontraditional (manufactured) exports expand. However, these trends have been missing in South Asia. Restrictions on foreign ownership, deemed necessary by investors, created a resource scarcity in the Indian economy leading to a crisis in the economy. Now let us examine the inflows of Japanese foreign direct investment in India.

India's share of Japanese FDI is miniscule, whether looked at as stock or flow, Asia or worldwide. However, Japan has come up as the third biggest non-NRI source of FDI in India after USA and Germany. Between 1980 and 1991, Japanese FDI

in India stood at Rs. 110 crores or 8% of the total FDI flows into the country during this period. In fact, in 1980 Japanese FDI in India was at its peak. This was due to the increasing collaborative efforts related to Maruti Udyog, which still remains the largest joint venture with the Japanese in India. However, after 1980 there were no significant ventures with Japanese collaboration. Particularly after 1982, there was no sustained inflow of Japanese FDI into India, causing a general decline in FDI flows into the country during 1989 and 1990. But the situation improved somewhat in 1991, when Japanese FDI in the country gained momentum. In this regard, it is interesting to note that all Japanese investments in India have been in the nature of minority equity holdings.

As far as technical collaborations with India are concerned, Japan has emerged as the fourth largest collaborator, the other three being the USA, the UK and Germany. Between 1980 and 1991, India made 620 collaborations with Japanese firms. But it is alarming to note that there has been a yearly decline in Japanese collaborations since 1988.8

Joint ventures between India and Japan have also been in the red. Compared to those with other nations, they seem to be excessively import-intensive and comparatively unprofitable. The former feature may be due to the heavy concentration of Indo-Japanese joint ventures in industries such as automobiles. The latter could reflect the dependence of the Japanese partner on intra-firm transfer pricing on project and intermediates/component imports rather than corporate profits.

Hence, keeping in view a broader overview of FDI inflows from Japan, India accounts for a negligible quantum, i.e. 0.1% of the total Japanese FDI worldwide. A comparison of Japanese FDI in India with that in Asia or worldwide reveals that, in effect, India had no place in Japanese FDI during the 1980s. In 1989,

the total Japanese FDI stock in India stood at US \$166 million. The worldwide figure was US \$ 254 billion, with Asia alone accounting for more than US \$ 40 billion. It is pertinent to note that almost all the nations in East Asia and Southeast Asia have Japanese FDI stocks of over one billion dollars, with the exception of Indonesia which has the largest stock at US \$ 10 billion. This means that 'India has been getting more and more peripheral for Japan just as Japan has been getting more and more important for India and the world'. 10

Nearly a year has passed since the announcement of a liberal economic policy which would lead to drastic changes with regard to foreign investment flows into India. But all the measures taken have failed to attract the Japanese. So far, only one Japanese company, Fujitsu Corporation of Japan, has decided to invest here. 11 Ironically, even this decision was taken before the proclamation of the new investment policy.

Recently, a delegation of 100 top Japanese businessmen visited India. This delegation was sponsored by the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) to explore possibilities for investment in various sectors of the economy. Similarly, in March 1992, another delegation came to Delhi on an investment-cum-study mission. But, to date, neither of these two delegations have submitted any concrete proposal to the Indian government. The result is that Japanese FDI in India remains a myth. Why do the Japanese want to wait and watch the situation'? According to S. Majumdar, 'India could not offer Japanese investors what they wanted. And whatever India could offer was not enough for Japanese investors.'12

Not long ago some Japanese delegates submitted a list of 21 concessions for investing in India. How-

10. Ibid p. 42.

April 1992, p. 6.

6. James, Naya and Meier. Asian Deve-

lopment: Economic Success and Policy Lessons. Wisconsin: Wisconsin University

11. Financial Express, New Delhi, 16

Press, 1989, p. 122.

<sup>8.</sup> Ibid. p. 42.

<sup>9.</sup> Ibid. p. 41

Sridharan, E., Japan and the New World Order: Implications for India. New Delhi: CPR, November, 1991, pp. 41-46.

<sup>12.</sup> Majumdar, S. 'Why are the Japanese Reluctant'. New Delhi: The Financial Express, 16 April 1992, p. 8.

ever, these concessions are too difficult to comply with. For example, they have asked for 100% equity along with a drastic reduction in the existing customs duty structure. India cannot afford this. But Japan has managed to acquire 100% equity in other Asian countries. Even socialist China, which is similar to India in respect of cheap labour and abundant natural resources, has offered 100% equity to them. In addition, Pakistan, Bangladesh and other important nations of South Asia have also liberalized their economy to a great extent, and that too, much before India. Pakistan has already permitted 100% equity. India thus has to do a lot of rethinking in this regard, and make an all-out effort to be competitive with the other nations of South Asia and East Asia.

According to Rokuro Ishikawa, the leader of the Japanese Economic Mission (JEM), Tokyo, who had visited the country in January 1992, India's fiscal and industrial policies are short of target and, as a result, instead of encouraging major investing countries in general and Japan in particular, they are actually hindering them. He rightly suggested that India must make an earnest attempt to restructure its tax system and make it more and more competitive, keeping in mind the existing tax structure of China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines. These efforts might help improve the quality of Indian goods, increasing their capacity to face tough competition in the international market.

Ishikawa also felt that the existing tariff rates in respect of capital goods, raw materials and components need to be lowered. This would enable Indian firms to chalk out long-term corporate policies. He also suggested that India should remove licensing in the consumer electronics and automobile sectors so that Japanese companies could come forward and participate more effectively and efficiently in the growth and development of these two vital sectors of the Indian economy.

It is clear that there is a very wide gap between Indian and Japanese

perceptions of each other. Most Indians assume that Japanese investors are like their American or European counterparts in character. Hence, the Japanese are 'invariably misunderstood by the Indian bureaucrats and businessmen'.13 In reality, it is not an easy task to woo the Japanese business community, as they are generally tougher. In this respect, an observation made by the Director General of Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO), an apex body to regulate and expand trade and investment is worth mentioning. According to him, 'You still have many controls to go. Japanese investors are businessmen. They are not philanthropists.'

Will foreign direct investment increase more rapidly in India during the 1990s? There are good reasons to expect that it will. First, as long as India continues to liberalize investment policy and to maintain a higher level of growth, it will continue to receive larger foreign direct investment from Japanese firms. There are indications that real wages in Japan and other nations of East Asia and Southeast Asia will continue to increase faster than in India. As a result, the flow of FDI from higher-wage Asian countries to lower-wage India will be maintained for some time to come.

To maintain a higher level of inflows of Japanese foreign investments, India must take the following steps on a war footing. First, it must immediately make the necessary changes in the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA). Second, the recent policy changes have not gone far enough compared to ASEAN and other Asian economies. Third, the Indian government must guarantee political stability. The Japanese feel that total political stability has not yet been achieved, since the present government still functions with the help of other parties. Fourth, concerted efforts must be made to improve the required infrastructure such as power, transport, communication and ports. If these measures are not taken by the Indian government in the near future, all efforts at wooing Japanese businessmen will be in vain.

<sup>13.</sup> Majumdar, S. op cit.

# South Asia and Japan

SHIGEYUKI ABE and KAZUHIRO IGAWA

OF late, South Asia has been lagging behind the Asian Newly Industrialized Economies (NIEs) and ASEAN in terms of economic performance. Although Official Development Assistance (ODA) flows are huge, and Japan is a big donor to this area, it has not played a major role in expanding trade and private capital flow. It is desirable for South Asia and Japan to have the same close economic ties as Japan has with the Asian NIEs and ASEAN.

Many countries have argued that the role of the private sector in technology transfer and business activities is the key to economic development. In this context a new social and political framework to ease such a transfer mechanism should be devised and constructed; lessons should be drawn from the experiences of Japan, Asian NIEs and even asean. Recognizing the need for foreign capital, in recent years South Asian countries have radically revised their liberalization plans for foreign investment. Among these, the plans for reform initiated last year by India and Bangladesh, are noteworthy.1 The success of NIEs and ASEAN has obviously inspired South Asian countries to follow a similar path of economic development.

The integration of the two Germanies forced Germany to spend more on its domestic economy (in order to reconstruct and stabilize East Germany), rather than on the rest of the world. Given the reconstruction expenses of Germany and the continuing twin deficits and economic weakness of the US, it seems that fewer funds can be provided by these two titans to the developing world.

To make matters worse, additional funds are required for the reorganization and reform of Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). This adds to the uneasiness of South Asian countries as world funds shift to this new area. The only reliable economic giant for them in this decade will thus be Japan. The latter should therefore play a major role in providing funds, both officially as well as privately, to this region. In this paper we will try to estimate the potential availability of funds from Japan and also discuss briefly the past, present and future of Japan-South Asia relations in terms of trade, capital flows and development

To begin with, we must clarify that Japan's contribution to trade

<sup>\*</sup>This is an edited version of a paper presented at the conefrence organized by ICEG-ICRIER and EWC. Reproduced with permission.

<sup>1.</sup> In July 1991 India introduced a new policy, the Foreign Investment Law, which is a substantial modification of the FERA (Foreign Exchange Regulation Act) of 1974. Bangladesh also announced a new Industrial Policy in 1991.

<sup>2.</sup> Kaifu, then prime minister, had already taken an initiative in this direction by visiting South Asia in 1990. This visit is generally regarded as an epoch-making event to expand and construct political and economic relationships. It is important to enforce this with follow up action. In fact, Japan had already dispatched economic missions to enlarge trade and investment relations and had held meetings such as the 'South West Asia Fourm'.

TABLE 1

| South Asian Countries: Population, Per Capita GNP and Relations with Japa | South Asian | Countries: Po | pulation, l | Per Capit | ta GNP and | Relations with | Japan |
|---|-------------|---------------|-------------|-----------|------------|----------------|-------|
|---|-------------|---------------|-------------|-----------|------------|----------------|-------|

|             | Population | Per Capita GNP | Exports<br>to Japan | Imports<br>from Japan | Japanese<br>in residence | Nationals<br>in Japan |
|-------------|------------|----------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
|             | 1989, 1000 | 1989, \$       | 1990, mil.\$        | 1990, mil \$          | 90.10.1                  | 90.12.31              |
| India       | 832,535    | 350            | 2,075               | 1,708                 | 1,190                    | 3,107                 |
| Sri Lanka   | 16,779     | 430            | 134                 | 315                   | 625                      | 1,206                 |
| Nepal       | 18,431     | 170            | 3                   | 59                    | 363                      | 447                   |
| Pakistan    | 109,950    | 370            | 537                 | 1,006                 | 681                      | 2,067                 |
| Bangladesh  | 111,590    | 180            | 71                  | 376                   | 426                      | 2,109                 |
| Korea       | 42,380     | 4,400          | 11,707              | 17,457                | 5,826                    | 687,940               |
| Singapore   | 2,684      | 10,450         | 3,571               | 10,708                | 12,701                   | 1,194                 |
| Indonesia   | 178,211    | 490            | 12,721              | 5,040                 | 7,031                    | 3,623                 |
| Thailand    | 55,200     | 1,170          | 4,147               | 9,126                 | 14,289                   | 6,724                 |
| China       | 1,105,067  | 360            | 12,054              | 6,130                 | 8,269                    | 150,339               |
| Philippines | 61,224     | 700            | 2,157               | 2,504                 | 4,025                    | 49,092                |
| Malaysia    | 17,340     | 2,130          | 5,402               | 5,511                 | 6,116                    | 4,683                 |

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1991), p.1 and p.49.

and direct investment has been rather small though its odd position is very strong in this region. The success of Asian NIEs and ASEAN should have prompted South Asian countries to attract more private funds for their economies in order to enhance competitiveness and export orientation. They should also have lowered their dependence on official funding, and endeavoured to transform their economies by having patterns of trade and investment similar to those of the Asian NIEs and ASEAN. The collapse of communist countries has led to a fear of capital being squeezed. By estimating the Investment Savings (18) balances of three major economies we will try to portray their effect on South Asian countries. It has been suggested that if the US cuts down its twin deficits, and if Asian NIEs and ASEAN become creditors rather than debtors, South Asian countries would not need to worry too much about the capital squeeze. We will deal with the role of Japan on this

#### Trade Relations with Japan

The trade relations between South Asian countries and Japan are summarized in Table 1. Compared with other Asian countries, the presence of South Asian countries (in terms of South Asian nationals) in Japan is negligible. The number of Japan

nese residing in South Asian countries is also negligible (Table 1). In respect of trade, South Asian countries have been very small partners of both Japan and the US throughout the 1970s and 1980s: in fact, the trade shares remain less than 20%. The White Paper on World Economy by the Economic Planning Agency (EPA) is generally a good source for most current world statistics in relation with Japan. However, though its 1991 edition mentioned India due to its weak relations with Japan. no South Asian country was included in its earlier editions, reflecting the relative unimportance of these countries for Japan.

From the viewpoint of South Asian countries, however, both Japan and the US have become increasingly important as trading partners. For example, Japan's share in India's exports jumped from 11% in the 1970s to 21% in the 1980s, while the US share leapt from 13% to 33%. The same trend, i.e. increasing shares of both countries in exports, was observed from the 1970s to the 1980s in all the other South Asian countries—although USA's share is more impressive than that of Japan.

On the other hand, Japan's import share for India remained at about 8% in the 1970s and increased

only slightly in the 1980s, while that of the US dropped from 16% to 11%. A similar tendency has been observed for other South Asian countries. A more detailed description of Japan's trade relations with individual countries follows:<sup>3</sup>

India: Although its export performance has been respectable and producer products have expanded, India's 1989 trade deficit amounted to \$5 billion. In 1990, however, India enjoyed a trade surplus of \$0.3 billion, its first since 1980. Important trade partners of India were the USSR (22.3%), the US (11.8%), Japan (8.4%), and UK (5.7%) for exports; and Iran (11.8%), the US (8.9), the USSR (8.7%), the UK (6.4%), and Japan (6.3%) for imports.

In 1990 imports from Japan recorded \$ 1.708 billion, a fall by 15.4%, while exports to Japan stood at \$ 2.075 billion, an increase by 4.9% from 1989. Since the growth of exports was higher than that of imports over the previous three years, the balance of payments deficit shrank from \$ 277 million to \$ 41

<sup>3.</sup> This section draws heavily from the White Paper on World Economy by JETRO (Japan External Trade Organization) and the White Paper on International Trade by MITI (Ministry of International Trade and Industry) in addition to the White Paper on World Economy by EPA (Economic Planning Agency).

million in 1989. The major imports from Japan are machinery and equipment and the potential demand for these is increasing. The growth of telecommunication machines, electric parts and sewing machines exceeded 25% in 1989. In 1990 the import of certain types of machinery expanded drastically: textile machinery by 109.4%, loading machinery by 44.5% and train cars by 330.6%. Regarding exports, textile products expanded by 24.5% in 1989; in particular, clothing expanded by 66.4%. Iron ore expanded by 25.3% and diamonds by 8.1%; but prawns shrank by 22.6% because of severe competition with Thailand and Indonesia. In 1990, dyestuffs increased by 38.5%, clothing expanded by 14.4% while leather work expanded by 19.3%.

Srt Lanka: Because of the continued deficit in the balance of payment, the government of Sri Lanka announced a substantial devaluation of its rupee in 1989: 17.4% against the US dollar, 6.6% against the yen, and 16.3% against its Statutory Drawing Rights (SDR). Exports recorded Rs. 5,617 billion and imports Rs. 8,022 billion in 1989. Export expansion was observed in tea, coconut, textiles and clothing, rubber and other agricultural products. Industrial exports expanded by 25.6% while agricultural exports increased by 9.7%. Consumer products shared 26.1% in total imports while intermediate goods such as petroleum, fertilizers, chemical drugs and wheat shared 56.1%.

According to Japanese statistics, Japan's exports to Sri Lanka recorded \$ 117 million while imports from Sri Lanka stood at \$ 295 million in 1989. Although the export of transport equipment expanded drastically, due to the slow economy in 1989 that of other machines shrank. In Japanese imports, diamonds expanded tremendously-to \$ 4.27 million, though other jewels slowed down. There was also a drop in the import of prawns, but clothing and teaexpanded. In 1990, Japanese export to Sri Lanka stood at \$ 314.9 million, a 6.5% rise over the previous year. Machinery was the major item. In the same year, Japan imported from Sri Lanka goods worth \$ 134.133 million, of which prawns,

tea, titan, and rubber were the major items.

Pakistan: Tradé expanded in 1988-89. Exports recorded Rs. 90.2 billion (rupee) while imports stood at Rs. 135.8 billion. Among export items, textiles and related products shared 39.2%, and cotton yarn 20.3%: these items expanded. Leather shrank to 5.4%. Major export partners are Japan (11.6%), the US (11.4%) and West Germany (6.2%). In imports, wheat and machines increased to share 29.4%. Major import partners are the US (15.7%), Japan (13.8%) and Kuwait (6.3%).

In 1990, Pakistan's exports to Japan decreased from the previous year by 8.8%, amounting to \$537 million. Major increasing items are food (mostly shrimp) with a 17.7% increase, chemical products, 27.8%, and machinery, 20.7%. Pakistan's import from Japan was \$1,005 million. This represented a 2.1% drop although there were several substantially increased items such as rubber (30.2%) and paper (26.8%) products, and agricultural (98.9%) and telecommunication (111.9%) machines.

Bangladesh: Exports expanded to T40.5 billion (taka) while imports expanded to T103.2 billion. Traditional exports such as jute and clothing were still strong while chemical fertilizers, tea and frozen fish products expanded. While traditional exports of jute had a share of 69% in 1982-83, this dropped to 33% in 1988-89. Export partners are the US (26.8%), Italy, the UK, West Germany and Japan. Import partners are Japan (11.6%), Singapore, Arab Emirates (7.9%) and the US (5.8%).

As for trade specifically with Japan, exports to the latter have been shrinking. They dropped by 12.4% from the previous year and were recorded at T1.745 billion. Frozen shrimps shared 60.7%. Together with jute and leather, the import share reached 91%. Imports from Japan increased by 41.3% and reached T7.613 billion. Major imports include steel, transportation equipment, and non-electric and electric machines. In 1990, exports to Japan recorded a 2.6% increase and amounted to \$70.8 million, major items being food and textiles. Im-

ports, of which machines were the major item, recorded \$ 376 million, an 11.7% increase.

Nepal: Its volume of trade is very small, almost negligible. In 1990, its exports stood at \$ 217 million and imports at \$ 452 million. Trade deficit was a normal feature for Nepal during the 1980s. Its most important trading partner is India, whose share in Nepal's trade was about a quarter in the 1980s but became much smaller in 1990. The relationship with Japan shows a typical pattern, i.e., Nepal imports substantially from Japan while it exports next to nothing, indicating that Nepal's imports from Japan rely on aid money.

### Overall Characteristics and Revealed Competitiveness

Japan imports mainly raw materials and fishery products from South Asian countries while its exports to this region consist mostly of machines, including automobiles. Research shows that Asian countries have comparative advantage in textile fibres, crude animal oil, vegetable oil, leather, textile yarn and fabric, non-metal mineral, travel goods, clothing and footwear. Japan has a comparative advantage in fruit and vegetables, sugar and preps honey, coffee, tea, cocoa, spices and animal feed.

Lt has been found that although the revealed comparative advantage RCA figures for South Asian countries change between two distinct years, they remain large and are naturally greater than one. In other words, the RCA position is unchanged. The RCA for Japan changed from above (below) one to below (above) one. Japan loses RCA in chemical products, plastic materials, wood products, textile yarn, metal, travel goods, clothing and footwear. But despite losing RCA, in some commodities, it remains competitive in iron and steel, electrical machinery, transport equipment and miscellaneous goods. Japan gains RCA in non-electric machinery and instruments.

As the flying geese theory suggests, if South Asian countries become stronger in Japan's losing RCA commodities, compensating trade

| Direct Investment                                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Number of Japanese Firms Abroad (all industries) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

| - <del></del> | Total | -75  | 76-80 | 81-85     | 86  | 87   | 88   | 89   | 90   | 91-            | 10% |
|---------------|-------|------|-------|-----------|-----|------|------|------|------|----------------|-----|
| World total   | 13522 | 2811 | 1493  | 2111      | 727 | 1049 | 1370 | 1453 | 1423 | 791            | 233 |
| Asia total    | 5126  | 1185 | 590   | 735-      | 196 | 406  | 557  | 545  | 498  | 325            | 108 |
| Korea         | 392   | 136  | 47    | 43        | 13  | 48   | 34   | 34   | 14   | 14             | 17  |
| China         | 358   | _    | _     | 72        | 30  | . 35 | 63   | 61   | 41   | 52             | 1   |
| Taiwan        | 735   | 211  | - 73  | 89        | 25  | 93   | 93   | 70   | 48   | 20             | 19  |
| Hong Kong     | 827   | 227  | 114   | 124       | 46  | 72   | 71   | 65   | 55   | 38             | 14  |
| Thailand      | 820   | 197  | 45    | 70        | 20  | 50   | 131  | 129  | 107  | 51             | 14  |
| Singapore     | 806   | 136  | 153   | 159       | 30  | 49   | 70   | 69   | 84   | 44             | 17  |
| Malaysia -    | 540   | 94   | 57    | 100       | 21  | 27   | 54   | 73   | 72   | 39             | 19  |
| Philippines   | 183   | 47   | 38    | 16        | Î   | 8    | 12   | 21   | 22   | 16             | 6   |
| Indonesia     | 338   | 108  | 53    | 28        | 5   | 11   | 16   | 19   | 45   | 47             | 1   |
| India         | 65    | 18   | 4     | 14        | 5   | Ŕ    | 9    | 1    | 3    | <del>-</del> - | ĝ   |
| Pakistan      | 14    | 2    | 1     | 4         | _   | 1    | ź    | 2    | 2    | _              | 2   |
| Sri Lanka     | 19    | 6    | î     | $\dot{7}$ | _   | _    | 2    | _    | 1    | 1              | 1   |
| Bangladesh    | 5     | ī    | 1     | 2         | _   | _    | _    | 1    | -    | _              |     |
| Nepal         | 3     | î    | 1     | _         | _   | _    | _    | _    |      | 1              | _   |

Source: Kaigai Shinshutsu Kigyo Soran '92, Toyo Keizai.

should expand. So far Asian NIEs and ASEAN have either filled this gap, or gained RCA in these commodities. Division of labour with Japan has thus been more or less achieved. The industrial structure of South Asian countries is still at a rudimentary stage, and it needs to be developed in order to catch up with leading Asian nations. As Asian NIEs and ASEAN follow Japan and go further up the development ladder, South Asian countries should fill the gap they leave behind. Asian NIEs and ASEAN have shown that direct involvement of the private sector in production is more than necessary to promote structural reform. Japanese foreign direct investment has played a major role in creating more RCA for Asian NIEs and ASEAN. In order to expand their economies, South Asian countries need to strengthen industrial production and to do this more foreign capital is required.

#### Foreign Direct Investment<sup>4</sup>

As has already been pointed out, trade relations between Japan and South Asian countries have been slight. The foreign direct investment (FDI) relation has also been negli-

gible (Table 2). As shown in this table, only a very small number of Japanese FDI activities are centred in South Asia. The analysis also reveals that the more funds Japanese firms have invested in a country, the faster has been its economic growth. In terms of the number of FDI firms. Asian NIEs received as many as 2,490 out of an Asia total of 4,299, with ASEAN, excluding Singapore, receiving 1,469. In contrast, South Asian countries attracted only 110 FDI firms. Attracting Japanese FDI seems to be a key to achieving high economic growth, although there is no statistical proof of direct linkage.

Why has Japanese FDI been so small in this region? Political stability and social unrest are, of course, primary reasons: but the drawbacks of strict regulations coupled with red tape and the mental barriers which are characteristic of Japanese managers cannot be overlooked. A recent survey by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MTTI) shows that a major objective of Japanese FDI is to expand local sales and to export

products to third countries. Too many and too strict regulations, coupled with weak trade relations with Japan, will naturally discourage heavy FDI in this region. South Asian countries therefore need to increase their local sales and exports to other countries in order to attract more Japanese FDI. In other words, they should find a way of making FDI profitable for both parties.

The second most important objective is to reduce the cost of labour. South Asia can stress this factor. In fact, we can expect a shift of production from Asian NIEs to ASEAN and from ASEAN to South Asia for labour intensive products. As Japanese FDI expanded in Asian NIEs, they achieved high economic growth and higher wage rates. In order to obtain cheap labour, both Japan and the NIEs had thus to shift their production base to ASEAN. The same shift can be expected in large volume to South Asian countries in the near future. The commencement of joint ventures between Japan and Korea is a favourable indication. However, it is essential that South Asian countries address themselves to the main issues that are blocking FDI growth.

<sup>4.</sup> This section draws heavily from various issues of Jetrao's White Paper on Foreign Direct Investment.

<sup>5.</sup> According to Hideki Yoshihara, Kobe University, a very important factor to consider is the mental blocks or barriers which exist in the minds of Japanese businessmen when they think about investing, particularly in India.

<sup>6.</sup> In 1990 a large-scale textile project was announced which involves a Korean firm as a partner. See JETRO (1992).

As has been pointed out, FDI is very sparse in South Asia. But what about size? The Toyo Keizai Kaigai Kigyo Shinshutsu Soran gives a ranking of Japanese firms abroad in terms of total sales. Among the 200 best-ranking manufacturing firms, Maruti Udyog, a joint venture of Suzuki Motors which started automobile and parts production in 1983, ranked seventh. TVS Suzuki, a joint venture of Suzuki Motors. which started motorcycle production in 1984, ranked 97th. Kansal Paints' Goodlass Nerolac Paints ranked 142nd. Non-manufacturing firms were not listed at all.

Although small in number and size, most FDI has been concentrated in India and Pakistan. In these large countries there is, however, a specific trend in the FDI flow. In the 1950s, investment centred around the chemical industry i.e. glass, dye, vinyl. In the 1960s, the focus was electrical-watt meter and transformer, wire—as well as synthetic fibre, and fertilizers. Since the 1970s, FDI has become auto-related with many major Japanese auto manufacturers investing. Fishery and fish processing also became popular in recent years. Sri Lanka attracted Japanese porcelain and cement and Nepal attracted Japanese tourism. The most popular areas of Japanese investment in Southeast Asia are textiles, clothing and home electronic appliances.

India: Since 1984, India has been promoting economic liberalization, particularly in relation to investment of foreign capital. In reality, however, foreign investment since 1985 has been on the decline, in both value and number. In 1987 the number of Indian firms which had joint ventures with foreign firms was 853, compared with 958 in 1986; the value of investment, however, increased slightly from Rs. 1069.52 to Rs. 1077.89 million. The largest contributor is the US (Rs. 197,295)

million) while Japan ranks fourth (Rs. 71,69.62 million). Automobile-related investment has been large; other areas include electronics such as telecommunication, food processing, plywood, fishery, medical equipment and various types of machinery.

he following factors are problematic in India's investment onvironment and policy: Strong demand for local content although domestic parts manufacturers are still unable to cope; high tariff rate and frequent revisions which lead to difficulty in cost calculation; weak infrastructure, in particular, electricity and transportation; restrictive foreign capital ratio of 40%. The anti-trust policy makes it difficult to have joint ventures with leading companies. According to the Japanese External Trade Organization (JETRO), Japanese FDI in India has been decreasing although India anticipates more investment from Japan. Factors which make this difficult are stringent foreign capital control, complex approval procedures, difficulty in finding partners and parts suppliers, and regulations for resident Japanese. Although the Fast Track Committee was instituted in 1988 to specifically promote FDI from Japan, there is no significant rise discernible as yet.

Pakistan: Due to the good performance of Pakistan's economy, foreign direct investment in 1988 stood at Rs. 2.396 billion. For 10 years, from 1979 to 1988, Pakistan received Rs. 9.245 billion in FDI. The major contributors were the US (41.7%), the UK (16.5%) and Saudi Arabia (5.6%), the Japanese contribution being very low at 1.4%. The Japanese finance ministry reported that in 1987, Japan invested only \$4.64 million in five ventures. However, it was an increase from \$2.37 million in 1985. Although Suzuki, Hino and Nissan Diesel invested as early as 1982 and Honda initiated its first investment in 1988, auto-related investment has since been increasing.

In order to promote foreign investments, the Pakistan government tried to strengthen its FDI administration and ease procedures. For instance, it introduced an export

processing zone (EPZ) under which FDI firms were granted some privileges in terms of exchange control and taxes. In April 1989, it set up a Board of Investment; it also revised EPZ regulations and, for the first time, allowed foreign firms to repatriate capital and profits.

To develop domestic industry, the Pakistan government has been trying to promote foreign capital investment by the private sector. As an incentive, projects in areas designated underdeveloped and industries requiring special promotion were tax exempted. The government also gave an assurance of dividend and principal transfer, and opened public business to the private sector. Automatic permission was granted to industries with a certain level of capital along with a simplification in the process of granting permissions, if needed, by these industries. As incentives per se, these should prove to be quite effective. Unfortunately, insufficient infrastructure, political instability, and security problems still remain obstacles in the smooth inflow of capital.

Japanese FDI in Pakistan has been increasing since 1984. According to MOF statistics, the accumulated direct investment amounted to \$ 110 million in 59 ventures at the close of 1990. Manufacturing shared about 90% in terms of value and 60% in terms of ventures. Commerce attracted eight ventures and \$ 1.87 million while services acquired two ventures and \$ 2.8 million. Finance and insurance attracted only two projects with \$ 1.78 million. Fishing attracted only one and \$ 0.21 million. In 1990 a large project was launched in the textile industry, which includes the Koreans as a partner, and this is expected to go on stream some time in 1992.

Sri Lanka: The development of FDI in Sri Lanka has been adversely affected by the racial problems in the country. Foreign investment had been on a decline since 1983, but in 1987 the trend seemed to change. FDI in EPZs numbered 31 in 1987, compared to 10 in 1986; it rose to Rs. 812 million from Rs. 186 million. FDI in other areas remained 77 in number, but increased from Rs. 1,083 to Rs. 1,308 million from 1986

<sup>7.</sup> These statistics are for 1988 and based upon Toyo Keizai's questionnaires. The ranks are based only upon questionnaires returned. In fact the same kind of survey for 1990 revealed the 50 largest joint ventures with Japanese firms. Maruti was one of the firms listed and it had reported sales of 8 748 million. It ranked 21st in 1990.

to 1987. Areas of investment include clothing, textiles, food, rubber, nonmetal ore, machines and food processing. Clothing and textiles are still the major areas for investment, but a clear diversification is now evident. The UK, Hong Kong, Singapore, the US, West Germany, and Japan are the major investors, the NIEs being important contributors in recent years.

FDI to Sri Lanka had been expanding since 1977, when the government changed its political stance to economic liberalization because of various investment incentives and cheap and abundant labour. But with the onset of the racial problem in 1983, FDI began to drop and in 1985 it had become one-tenth of the highest year. The annual average of Japanese ventures in Sri Lanka amounted to three or four. According to the Ministry of Finance, between 1951 and 1990 Japan had 119 investments amounting to \$98 million. According to a survey conducted by the Japanese Chamber of Commerce in Sri Lanka, the Japanese are favourably inclined towards Sri Lanka for the following reasons: abundant availability of cheap, English-speaking labour, industries with young workers and most important, clear investment incentive policies which facilitate long-term investment planning. On the other hand, there is political instability, poor quality

middle management and engineers, government inefficiency, lags in infrastructure, difficulty in local access to investment goods, no private capital accumulation, an absence of productivity enhancement and a lack of commercial ethics. These problems need to be addressed to attract investments from Japan.

Bangladesh: In the past, most Japanese investments in Bangladesh were concentrated in BPZ. They are reported to be doing well in textile machine parts, prawn troll fishery, small shipping, chain, pilot lamp and fishing utilities. Current activity centres around gloves, metal processing, fan motor, and shoes. Several investment missions from Japan visited Bangladesh in 1989-90, and an increasing number of FDIs are expected to utilize the cheap labour available in the near future.

For the period between July 1990 and June 1991, permitted investments stood at 35. These showed an impressive rise in the investments made by Asia, Hong Kong, Japan and Korea. Bangladesh attracted 34 projects and T 1.83 billion, which is 4.5 times the amount recorded in the previous year. Areas of investment were: textiles (11 projects), chemicals (8), pharmaceuticals (3) leather (2), food processing (2), machines, oil refinery, metal, communication machinery, handicraft,

precise modelling, toys etcetera. Earlier, European countries dominated in the area of foreign investment in Bangladesh but now Asian countries, in particular Korea and Hong Kong, have increased tremendously in presence.

The year 1991 saw the announcement of a new industrial policy according to which: no prior approval of BOI is required for foreign investment or for the employment of foreign labour. Under the policy, the scale of small enterprises was raised from T15 million to T30 million. Corporate tax arising from exports was made fully refundable, and the upper limit of loans from development banks was changed from T100 million to T300 million. Also, the EPZ was expanded to include Kurna.

The scrapping of prior approval is a great leap forward towards full liberalization. According to a JETRO survery, Japanese firms in EPZ hiked up the existing low wages, used young and abundant labour, improved EPZ infrastructure, introduced a promotion policy favourable to foreign capital, and considered the possibility of 100% capital contribution. However, it was felt that while BEPZA (Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Agency) was capable of acting quickly, liaison with

TABLE 3

| Japanese FDI Activity Summary                  |                |      |      |       |            |      |      |      |      |       |      |
|--|----------------|------|------|-------|------------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|
|  |                | 78   | 79   | 80    | 81         | 82   | 83   | 84   | 85   | 86    | 87   |
| 1 Total sales                                  | b₅             | 23   |      | 29    | 38         | 40   | 30   | 54   | 56   | 71    | 103  |
| 2 DFI stock                                    | b <b>\$</b>    | 9.2  | 10.9 | 12.6  | 14.9       | 17   | 19.5 | 22   | 24.4 | 28.2  | 36   |
| 3 1/2  | %              | 250  |      | 230   | 255        | 235  | 154  | 245  | 230  | 252   | 286  |
| 4 DFI flow                                     | b <sub>s</sub> | 2.04 | 1.69 | 1.71  | 2.31       | 2.08 | 2.56 | 2.51 | 2,35 | 3.81  | 7.83 |
| 5 Purchases                                    | b§             | _    | 15.3 | 19.1  |            | -    | 13.9 | -    | _    | 24.7  | -    |
| 6 Equipment investment                         | Ъ\$            | -    | 1.99 | 2.3   | -          |      | 2.57 | -    | -    | 3.32  | -    |
| 7 4/6  | %              | -    | 85.9 | 100,4 | -          | _    | 99.6 | -    |      | 114.8 |      |
| 8 Export (to Japan) ratio in total sales       | b <b>s</b>     | _    | 10.9 | 9.9   | _          | -    | 11.6 |      | _    | 7.8   | _    |
| 9 Import (from Japan)<br>ratio in purchases    | b <b>\$</b>    | _    | 42.8 | 41.2  | , <u> </u> | _    | 50.4 | -    |      | 53    | _    |
| 10 Import (from Japan) ratio in eq. investment | b <b>s</b>     | _    | -    | _     | _          | _    | 55.6 | _    | _    | 42.6  | _    |
| 11 5/1   | %              |      | 52.8 | 50.3  | -          | -    | 46.3 |      | -    | 34.8  | _    |

Source: Economic Planning Agency (1990).

other agencies required improvement.

Nepal: FDI activity in Nepal has been very small. According to Tokyo Keizai's survey publication, the country has only three joint ventures, all of which are travel-related: Hotel Himalayas, Nepal Hokke, and Trans-Himalayan Tours.

#### Other Factors Common to the Region

One characteristic of Japanese FDI, missing in South Asia but very common in other areas, is the high proportion of medium size enterprise investment. Most investments in this region have been made by major leading firms in Japan. This implies that FDI is a risky business and can be undertaken only by large firms. Knowing the current low level of foreign investment and the narrow and restricted fields within which it has to operate, the region should endeavour to lift various restrictions to invite more FDI from Japan. Although, as Table 3 suggests, on an average, 50% of input and 40% of equipment investment should be imported from Japan for FDI, it can be argued that at least half can be acquired locally. The region should take advantage of this. However, the important issue at present is to increase the volume of Japanese FDI in South Asia.

### Development Assistance and Prob-

Comparisons made in trade or investment flows in the area of ODA show that Japan has recently become the number one bilateral provider of loans and grant-in-aid, even to South Asia. However, despite being a major world donor it has been criticized for having no consistent philosophy, too much tying-up in ventures, too great an economic focus, and over-concentration in Asia. It is possible that, due to inexperience, Japan may on occasion have given ODA without cautious planning and enough follow up, but steps are being taken to rectify these weaknesses.

#### Characteristics of Japanese ODA

In terms of volume, Japanese foreign aid has come a long way in a short time. When Japan parti-

cipated in the Colombo Plan, its aid budget was only about \$50 thousand. Today it has become a major donor country, with its 1988 official development assistance disbursement of \$9.1 billion ranking second only to the US (\$10.1 billion). This was equivalent to 19.2% of the total

ODA by DAC countries. In 1989 Japan provided \$8.965 billion, which was a slight fall from 1988, but due to the decrease in US contribution it was the largest ODA donor. The subsequent fall in Japan's ODA is simply because the yen became weaker in 1989.

TABLE 4

### Japanese ODA to South Asia (million US3)

|            | ,              | Tackwisel Communication |                       |                |                      |                    |  |  |  |
|------------|----------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------------|--|--|--|
|            |                | Grant                   | Technical Cooperation | Sub-tota       | Govern<br>L. Logn (1 | meni<br>net) Total |  |  |  |
|            |                |                         |                       |                |                      |                    |  |  |  |
| Pakistan   | 1985           | 38.50                   | 4.70                  | 43.20          | 50.10                | 93.30              |  |  |  |
|            | 1986           | 31.90                   | 6.94                  | 38.84          | 112.72               | 151.56             |  |  |  |
|            | 1987           | 61.78                   | 11.01                 | 72.79          | 53.89                | 126.68             |  |  |  |
|            | 1988           | 89.46                   | 13.75                 | 103.21         | 198.97               | 302.18             |  |  |  |
|            | 1989           | 74.78                   | 14.26                 | 89.04          | 88.42                | 177.46             |  |  |  |
|            | 1990           | 56.06                   | 11.54                 | 67.60          | 125.96               | 193.56             |  |  |  |
|            | -1990          | 553.40                  | 94.59                 |                | 1,285.45             | 1,933.44           |  |  |  |
| India      | 1984           | 14.45                   | 3.15                  | 17.60          | 4.01                 | 21.61              |  |  |  |
| Illula     | 1985           | 9.65                    | 4.49                  | 14.14          | 7.77                 | 21.91              |  |  |  |
|            | 1986           | 22.53                   | 6.94                  | 29.47          | 197.23               | 226.70             |  |  |  |
|            | 1987           | 23.05                   | 10.12                 | 33.17          | 270.78               | 303.95             |  |  |  |
|            | 1988           | 35.28                   | 10.12                 | 45.59          | 133.87               | 179.46             |  |  |  |
|            | 1989           | 24.58                   |                       |                |                      | 257.24             |  |  |  |
|            |                | 22.17                   | 10.51                 | 35.09          | 222.15               |                    |  |  |  |
|            | 1990           | 246.41                  | 11.72                 | 33.88          | 53.38                | 87.26              |  |  |  |
|            | -1990          | 240.41                  | 82.98                 | 329.37         | 1,483.18             | 1,812.55           |  |  |  |
| Nepal      | 1984           | 15.15                   | 6.40                  | 21.55          | 6.97                 | 28.52              |  |  |  |
|            | 1985           | 36.31                   | 4.82                  | 41.13          | 9.61                 | 50.74              |  |  |  |
|            | 1986           | 44.66                   | 9.05                  | 53.71          | 14.35                | 68.06              |  |  |  |
|            | 1987           | <b>49.9</b> 8           | 14.74                 | 64.72          | 12.05                | 76 <b>.</b> 77     |  |  |  |
|            | 1988           | 41.37                   | 14.56                 | 55.93          | 6.43                 | 62.36              |  |  |  |
|            | 1989           | 42.24                   | 14.57                 | 56.81          | 20.58                | 77.39              |  |  |  |
|            | 1990           | 34.27                   | 12.86                 | 47.13          | 8.04                 | 55.17              |  |  |  |
| •          | -1990          | 370.40                  | 114.34                | 484.74         | 98.93                | 583.67             |  |  |  |
| Bangladesh | 1984           | <b>42.</b> 72           | 3.01                  | 45.73          | 21.31                | 67.04              |  |  |  |
| <b>6</b>   | 1985           | 38.52                   | 4.74                  | 42.26          | 50.05                | 93.31              |  |  |  |
|            | 1986           | 31.90                   | 6.94                  | 38.84          | 112.72               | 151.56             |  |  |  |
|            | 1987           | 61.78                   | 11.01                 | 72.79          | 53.89                | 126.68             |  |  |  |
|            | 1988           | 89.64                   | 13.75                 | 103.39         | 198.97               | 302.36             |  |  |  |
|            | 1989           | 135.59                  | 16.72                 | 152.31         | 218.29               | 370.60             |  |  |  |
|            | 1990           | 131 66                  | 19.98                 | 151.64         | 221.84               | 373.58             |  |  |  |
|            | -1990          | 944.19                  |                       |                | 2,057.53             | 3,131.68           |  |  |  |
| Sri Lanka  | 1984           | 29.42                   | 5.82                  | 35.24          | 28.53                | 63.77              |  |  |  |
| DITTAILE   | 1985           | 33.35                   | 7.71                  | 41.06          | 42.68                | 83.74              |  |  |  |
|            | 1986           | 56.61                   | 11.09                 | 67.70          | 59.20                | 126.90             |  |  |  |
|            | 1987           | 54.16                   | 12.47                 | 66.63          | 51.63                | 118.26             |  |  |  |
|            | - 1988         | 65.68                   | 21.18                 | 86.86          | 112.97               | 199.83             |  |  |  |
|            | 1989           | 75.89                   | 21.18<br>17.79        | 93.68          | 91.57                | 185.25             |  |  |  |
|            | 1989           | 74.39                   | 17.79<br>16.58        | 93.68<br>90.97 | 85.10                | 176.07             |  |  |  |
| `          | -1990<br>-1990 | 529.85                  | 16.58<br>126.79       | 656.64         | 912.92               | 1,340.38           |  |  |  |
|            | -1330          | 349.63                  | 120.79                | 030.04         | 912.92               | 1,340.30           |  |  |  |

a short time. When Japan parti- Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1990, 1991, 1992).

TABLE 5

|    | 1970                |                 | 1975                            | ·               | 1980                    |                  | 1989               |                            | 1990               |                  |
|----|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 1  | Indonesia<br>Korea  | 125.84<br>86.76 | Indonesia<br>Ko <del>rc</del> a | 197.92<br>87.44 | Indonesia<br>Bangladesh | 350.03<br>215.14 | Indonesia<br>China | 11 <b>45.2</b> 6<br>832.18 | Indonesia<br>China | 867.78<br>723.02 |
| 3  | Pakistan            | 39.55           | Philippines                     | 70.33           | Thailand                | 189.55           | Thailand           | 488.85                     | Philippines        | 647.45           |
| 4  | India               | 32.73           | Malaysia                        | 63.27           | Burma                   | 152.46           | Philippines        | 403.75                     | Thailand           | 418.57           |
| 5  | Philippines         | 19.23           | Egypt                           | 50.17           | Egypt                   | 122.97           | Bangladesh         | 370.60                     | Bangladesh         | 373.57           |
| 6  | Thailand            | 16.91           | Bangladesh                      | 47.05           | Pakistan                | 112.42           | India              | 257.23                     | Malaysia           | 372.62           |
| 7  | Iran                | 11.96           | India                           | <b>4</b> 6.61   | Philippines             | 94.40            | Sri Lanka          | 185.25                     | Turkey             | 324.31           |
| 8  | Burma               | 11.94           | Thailand                        | 41.12           | Korca                   | 76.30            | Pakistan           | 177.46                     | Pakistan           | 193.55           |
| 9  | China               | 9.53            | Iraq                            | 29.77           | Malaysia                | 65.63            | Nigeria            | 165.86                     | Sri Lanka          | 176.07           |
| 10 | Singapore<br>Top 10 | 5.75            | Nigeria                         | 27.31           | Sri Lanka               | 44.78            | Kenya              | 147.81                     | Poland             | 149.85           |
|    | total               | 360.20          |                                 | 661.08          |                         | 1423.68          |                    | 4174.25                    |                    | 4246.69          |
|    | World total         | 371.51          |                                 | 850.40          |                         | 1960.80          |                    | 6778.50                    |                    | 6939.56          |

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1990, 1991, 1992).

Japan's concentration on infrastructure aid has been criticized as being unresponsive to various needs of its recipients. In fact, Japan's infrastructure-related ODA share is 37.3% while the average of DAC countries remains 16.5%. While project-type aid played a central role in the past. Japan recognizes that a flexible approach is needed to properly respond to current conditions in developing countries. Non-project aid has been expanded as a relief measure to developing countries experiencing economic difficulties due to the deterioration in their international balance of payments, particularly since the mid-1980s.

Another feature of Japan's ODA has been its geographical concentration in Asia. Only a year before the first oil shock, almost 98% of Japan's assistance was disbursed in Asia. The Middle East was the region which triggered the greatest change in Japan's orientation toward foreign aid. The use of aid as a diplomatic tool in the Middle East helped to enlarge Japan's aid application beyond Asia. In 1987, the 10 largest recipients of Japanese ODA, sharing 63%, were Asia-oriented: Indonesia,

China, the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Thailand, Malaysia, Burma, Turkey and Pakistan. Today, though more than 60% of its ODA is still being channelled into this region, Japan has been increasing its aid to Africa. This effort is reflected in the expansion of Africa's share of total bilateral ODA to 13.8% in 1988, a four point increase over the previous year. Similar trends have been observed for the South Pacific and for Central America as well.

Japan has frequently been criticized for having the weakest of all concessional terms in the DAC. Yen loans, which require repayment albeit at a low interest rate, have the largest share in Japan's ODA. Yen loans comprise 58% in bilateral aid flows while the comparative figure for the US is just 5%. The grant element is thus only 47.3%, the lowest among DAC members. The Japanese government is presently trying to expand both the volume and the quality of its aid.

Even in the case of loans, a more flexible approach in response to the diversity of development needs is being favoured for non-project credits, including commodity loans and two-step loans. In fact, the number of Japanese non-project loans has risen: of special significance is the substantial increase in the amount of

structural adjustment loans (SAL) provided to developing countries for use in macro-economic reconstruction or policy support in specific sectors.

Another aspect that is frequently criticized is related to the aid 'principle' followed by Japan: i.e. the granting of aid on a 'request basis'. Japan will undertake ODA only when recipient countries request such action. But often recipient countries are not knowledgeable enough to fulfil the requirements needed to propose the aid request. This has allowed Japanese companies that operate behind the scene, particularly general trading (Sogo Shosha) and construction companies, considerable leeway in manipulating requests that are not always consistent with potential recipients' needs. In addition, the Japanese aid programme has been largely dependent on the private sector, because the Ministry of Finance (MOF) has never seen fit to raise personnel levels.

### Philosophy of Japanese ODA®

Through a long history of ODA activities, the twin objectives of 'recognition of interdependence' and 'humanitarian considerations' have

<sup>8.</sup> For a concurring view see Dennis T. Yasutomo. 'Why Aid? Japanese an Aid Great Power.' Pacific Affairs, Vol. 62, No. 4. Winter, 1989-90, p. 493.

<sup>9.</sup> See ODA 1990. Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

been generally accepted worldwide. Japanese ODA also stands by these twin objectives. However, current opinion holds that Japanese ODA is uninformed by any principles or philosophy. The so-called 'request basis' principle is a vivid reflection of Japan's self-help approach. In line with this, Japan tends to avoid prescriptive aid, and only assists projects given high priority by the recipient nation.

Certain suggestions have been made which, if adopted, would help make Japan's ODA similar to that of other countries, particularly the US. They include reconsidering the project proposal basis; expanding preproject research; extending various kinds of aid suitable for recipient countries; actively utilizing NGOs; improving the post-aid evaluation system; establishing an aid execution system; and developing human resources related to aid.

While these suggestions may prove suitable for new developments in such areas of ODA as sectoral loans, soft loans, coordination among donors, etcetera, it is not certain that they will work for project loans or area concentration, etcetera. In Asia, for instance, if Japan were to move towards more non-project loans, there would be less infrastructure development and this might not be desirable for economic development. This is because private capital will not flow in unless sufficient infrastructure is provided. Asian NIEs and ASEAN succeeded in inviting private capital because they first developed their infrastructure with the help of oda. With the democratization of Eastern Europe, Asian countries have begun to worry about the distribution of financial aid from Japan. How Japan should distribute this aid is a grey area in which no definite directions can be discerned as yet.

At the moment, Japan lacks sufficient ODA staff, and this lowers the efficacy and implementation of its aid plan. It should therefore spend 1% of its total aid fund on development and research. There also seems to be a strong tendency not to spend on such aspects as human development, and it is high time this was changed.

Also, while continuing to be Asia's major donor, Japan should recognize the nature of coordination. The flying geese pattern of development suggests that Asian NIEs are followed by ASEAN, who in turn are followed by South Asian countries. For technologies and personnel matters, it may be better to use the experience of NIEs to improve ASEAN and to use the experience of both these to improve South Asia. From this point of view, it may be worth taking the following measures: 10 (a) Japan should supply consultancy services and supervise projects while NIEs participate in infrastructure construction. (b) For feasibility studies, JICA could increase its foreign staff, especially from the NIEs, and at the same time make use of the long US aid history and its presence in South Asia as well. (c) In addition, Japan should enhance private capital flows to South Asia to the same extent as ODA.

It may be worthwhile mentioning more orthodox suggestions for economic cooperation in this region. In the context of Japanese aid, 11 Okawa classified developing countries into groups. The first group corresponds with the first phase of Japanese economic development (1868 to 1885): Ethiopia, Zaire, Bangladesh belong to this category. The second corresponds with the second phase (till 1897): Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Kenya, and Peru are in this group. Most of the South Asian countries belong to the first two groups.

he suggestion for the first group regarding aid is to put more emphasis on technological cooperation, food, and aid to increase food production. Since these countries export primary products and their level of education is low, capital assistance alone will not contribute much to the development. The second phase corresponds with the phase of import substitution. Capital transfer is effective only in this phase. Coopera-

tion must be well received in the area of assistance to small and medium enterprises (SME), improvement of industrial organization, and the enforcement of agricultural foundation.

#### S. Asian Economic Development

In the previous section we discussed the quality of aid given by Japan to South Asian countries. We now come to the possible volume of aid available to these countries from Japan. We will estimate the 18 balances of three major countries and examine the need for capital in Asian countries. Since there will be no shortage of capital if interest rates rise sufficiently to depress investment demand and enhance desired saving, we shall construct a simple model of investment demand and savings. With this model we will empirically evaluate what kind of interest rates and growth paths would resolve the capital shortage of the world in the 1990s, highlighting to role of Japan. But to do this, we have to first look at the current situation.

In the 1980s the oil crisis and twin deficits of the US squeezed the world capital market. In the 1980s, the twin deficits of the US continued, with unified Germany, the CIS and the breakdown of Eastern Europe putting further pressure on the world capital market.11 The anxiety about international fund shortage stems from the uneasiness of developing countries which anticipate, on the one hand, capital shortage in leading industrial countries. i.e. the US and Germany, and on the other, a capital squeeze resulting from the shift of funds for the reconstruction of former socialist countries.

Shortage of Capital in Asian Countries

In the 1990s, Japan becomes a major world fund supplier. Asian NIEs, with high income levels and increasing financial asset accumulation, will probably follow Japan in performing this role in the near future. Stimulated by the success of EC and NAFTA, ASEAN plans to form a free trade area. Private fund inflow

<sup>10.</sup> This suggestion is in line with Toshio Watanabe (1990).

<sup>11.</sup> Okawa, Kazushi. Basic Research on Planning: the Basic Direction of Economic Cooperation (Keizai Kyoryoku Kihon Hoshin Ritsuan no Tameno Kiso Chosa), 1982

<sup>12.</sup> According to Nihon Keizai Shinbun, 24 February 1991, the official aid to CIS amounts to 80.9 billion US dollars.

to this region is massive and may continue to be so for some time to come. From the is gap point of view this region is still suffering from capital shortage, but the current balance deficits have been financed sufficiently by private capital inflows from abroad.

A quick glance at the is gaps of selected Asian countries reveals that Korea moved from a position of capital shortage to abundance in 1984 and moved back to shortage in 1989.18 For Taiwan in the 1970s and 1980s, savings have been greater than investment. Hong Kong and Singapore grew to become capital abundant countries in 1984 and in 1986, respectively. Thus, Asian NIEs are basically capital abundant. The current balance surplus figures confirm this. Following Asian NIEs, ASEAN's performance, particularly of Thailand and Malaysia, has been improving. Malaysia's is balance turned to show capital abundance in 1984 and Thailand's in 1986. Malaysia's current balance surplus from 1987 is also impressive. It is indeed amazing to observe that savings and investment rates are more than or close to 30% for Asian NIEs and ASEAN, the only exception being the Philippines.

Some South and Southeast Asian countries neighbouring Asian NIEs and ASEAN are in the process of replacing or joining them in attracting private capital from the world, but it will take a few more years before they develop fully. It is certainly not easy for a population-plagued India or Pakistan to develop as quickly as the Asian NIEs. Pakistan's savings rate has been extremely low and it has thus been suffering acutely from is shortage. All these countries have economic needs which are quite different from those of Asian NIEs and ASEAN. They suffer from a shortage of capital but they cannot expect private fund inflows. The pledged on, therefore, still remains their most effective source for meeting capital demand, and they would naturally suffer if the allocation of official funds to the CIS, Eastern Europe and heavy debtor developing countries were to increase. The im-

pact of CIS and Eastern Europe will be felt more significantly by countries dependent upon official fund flows than by those which rely upon private funding.

Fund Flows from Japan the US and Germany

Estimates for international capital supply and demand are indispensable in evaluating the future of the world. We have estimated the demand and supply of capital for Japan, the US and Germany, three of the world's major industrial countries, in accordance with several possible scenarios. The rationale behind the selection of these three countries is simple: in world production, their share alone amounts to 43.9% or 60% or more in world industrial production.

According to the EPA's estimation, the shortage amounts to \$ 70 billion for industrial countries and \$33 billion for developing countries, not including the CIS and Eastern Europe.14 The total becomes \$ 103 billion in 1992 and 8 92 billion in 1993. The shortage of CIS and Eastern Europe, of course, should be added to this total to show the real and immense need for international fund flow. The issue in question is whether these three major industrial countries can provide sufficient capital in the near future to the developing world and to clarify how much higher a real interest rate and how much higher a growth rate are required for the world capital shortage to disappear.

Using a simple model, we worked out several scenarios based on various assumptions on growth paths and real interest rates. The basic (B) scenario assumes that the growth rates and interest rates for the 1990s will be the same as the average of the 1980s. The nur (I) scenario differs from the basic in assuming that the growth rate in the 1990s follows the IMF projections, i.e. 3.4% (Japan), 3% (USA), 2% (Germany). The high growth (HO) scenario assumes 5%, 4%, 3% growth, and the low growth (LO) scenario assumes

1% growth for the three countries. In addition we raise the average interest rates by 1 to 5% in combination with HO and LO assumptions (H1 to H5 and L1 to H5 scenarios).

Under B, the three countries will produce \$ 80 billion capital surplus in 1992 and 1993. If this is the base figure included in the world capital demand supply figures of EPA, we need an additional \$ 103 billion. In other words, the world capital shortage may disappear if these three countries can supply \$ 183 billion. With H5, i.e. high growth and high interest rate scenario, these three achieve 8 156 billion, countries which is close to the required amount. Reviewing the trend of the US is gap in the 1990s, we feel that even if just the US corrects its spending pattern and becomes self-sufficient, the world capital demand would be more or less fulfilled with scenario B (8 162 billion), or scenario HO (\$ 176 billion), or with scenario H1 (\$ 188 billion). It would not be necessary to consider scenario H5, which is in any case unrealistic.

In our scenarios we change the levels of GNP growth and interest rates. By shifting these parameters we can see the effects on international capital flows. This is true both for private as well as public funds. Changes in interest rates induce mainly private fund flows whereas changes in growth rate induce mainly public fund flows. Therefore, althongh H5 scenario does create a substantial fund, it does not necessarily create public funds. For South Asian countries, where official public funds are essential, it is important to know not only how much world capital is available but also how much official funding can be created. In our high growth scenario we simulated and found that an additional \$ 10 billion are available; these should be, in large part, official funds. In any case it is vital for all South Asian countries that the world's leading nations enjoy a higher economic growth in the 1990s than in the 1980s.

#### Japan/South Asia Policy Issues

It is necessary, by way of conclusion, to discuss the Japan/South

<sup>13.</sup> This is based upon the data by the EXIM Bank of Japan (1990).

<sup>14.</sup> EPA (1991) and Fukao (1991) provide some estimates also.

Asia issues from a broader viewpoint. As has been discussed, the coordination between private trade/ investment flows and the opa is very important. How Asian NIEs and ASEAN keep a leading edge over South Asia should be carefully studied. It seems that Japanese private capital flows have been affecting Southeast Asian countries to a great extent. The trade pattern between Southeast Asia and Japan used to be a vertical one. This should not be transformed into a horizontal pattern. By checking the revealed comparative advantage, private capital flows and on, we may be able to determine the direction in which South Asian and Japanese cooperation should move.

Japan's economy has now become big enough to take some responsibility for the development of world economy, particularly since Japan has relatively more funds in hand than any other developed country. We will go a step further and provide an insight into the strategic or political viewpoint regarding the Japanese concern with South Asia. The world is moving towards countries without borders; yet at the same time regionalism is strongly supported. In fact the world has been regrouped into three major blocs: the Europe bloc (BC), the American bloc (the US, Canada, Mexico etcetera), and the Japan bloc (Japan, Asian NIEs, ASEAN, and others). Each bloc, in the near future, will include many developing countries in its membership. The Europe bloc will contain African countries, the American bloc will embrace Latin America, and Japan, naturally, will incorporate South Asia. This is a driving force behind Japan's effort to forge stronger relations with South Asian countries. Earlier we discussed the flying geese pattern of development, from Japan to Asian NIEs to ASEAN to South Asia. From an economic viewpoint, 1.e. efficient allocation of resources, production and so on, stronger cooperation with South Asian countries cannot be circumvented.

In general, Japan engages in three activities; trade, investment, and

ODA. Compared with the voluminous ODA, trade and investment activities are very small. It is felt that private foreign investment is very influential, especially for the promotion of the host country's exports. South Asian countries are known for their large domestic markets and can use them to their advantage. Dynamic development, however, requires an outward outlook and more private sector activities than anything else.

Japan has a unique economic system. On the one hand, it uses the market mechanism; on the other, it uses special relations, a representative of which is 'keiretsu', in its economic units for transaction and economic planning. The private sector has a strong tie with the government which plans structural changes for it. It might be interesting to introduce this Japanese system to South Asian countries as a kind of technology transfer and to make this transfer a part of ODA. To implement this we should formally establish a mutual information exchange system between Japan and South Asian countries.

But it is not enough to enhance bilateral cooperation alone. Japan should consider the global division of labour, involving countries in different stages of development— Asian NIEs, ASEAN and South Asia, and find ways for them to stimulate each other in order to optimize economic performance and harmonize the world division of labour. Direct aid and help from Japan to South Asian countries is, of course necessary. But what is even more necessary is the involvement of ASEAN and Asian NIEs in the process of South Asia's economic expansion. demonstrated by the flying geese theory, it is very important in this context to adjust industrial structures so that the transfer and division of labour mechanism becomes smooth and efficient. Stability in politics, sound market mechanism, privatization and adequate infrastructure are all necessary for this purpose. Once South Asian countries allow the market mechanism to function with stability, Asian NIEs and asean together with Japan will begin to cooperate in the true sense of the word.

# Working with the Japanese

R. C. BHARGAVA

SOON after independence India embarked upon a programme of planned development, with the object of accelerating economic growth, attaining self-reliance and improving the quality of life of our people. Our political leaders and planners realized that the use of modern technology could result in accelerating the process of growth, and leap-frogging the economic gap which had developed between us and other Western countries. India's industrial development after 1950 was largely based on imported technology. The natural source of this technology was the West. Not only were countries in the Western hemisphere ahead of the rest of the world in technology. but there were advantages of language when dealing with the British or Americans. The British knew India well and already had investments here.

The technology inflow into India came both in the form of equity investments and through licence agreements. There were several companies which were established with foreign capital in excess of 50%. Most of these had to dilute equity subsequent to the enactment of the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act. At the same time, technology inflows came in a large way through

licence agreements, and the countries which were in the forefront of this activity were the United Kingdom, America, Germany and France. Managers and others in India became quite used to working with Europeans and Americans.

Indian companies rarely looked to Japan for technology or invest-ments till a few years ago. This was despite the fact that in the 1970s, it was clear that the Japanese had not only bridged the technology gap, but were rapidly becoming an economic superpower, and were generating large investable surpluses. Indian businessmen, however, probably felt uncomfortable in dealing with the Japanese because of their unfamiliarity with that country and its language. It was easier, and more comfortable, to continue to do business with countries, and with companies, who were known rather than move to unfamiliar territories. The approach of the government was no different, and Japan was largely ignored in terms of high-level political contacts.

The situation is rapidly changing. The Industrial Policy and the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act came under review last year, and the restrictive conditions regarding for-

eign investment have been substantially relaxed. The process of deregulating the economy and simplifying procedures is designed to introduce transparency into the system, and thereby make it easier for foreign investors to come to India. It has also been recognized that a large inflow of foreign equity capital is necessary for upgrading technology, introducing competition, accelerating industrial growth and job creation, and improving the balance of payments position. Japan is a country which today leads in technology and competitiveness of its products, and is a very large investor in foreign countries. India has, therefore, identified Japan as a country which should be wooed to make large investments here.

Japanese investment in India has so far been minimal, the Maruti project being the largest in India till now. However, the recent visit of the Finance Minister and the Prime Minister to Japan was made with the object of conveying to the Japanese government and business houses, the keenness of India for receiving Japanese investments. Certainly the Japanese have been showing much greater interest in India than ever before. There are, in fact, indications that several large investments in India may be announced by Japanese companies in the very near future. Once this happens, the probability is that the investment trickle of the past may become a flood in the coming years. If this happens, Indians who are familiar with working with the Westerners, will have to learn to work with the Japanese.

Today, the common perception is that the Japanese are difficult people • to work with. Even though they have made large investments in Western countries, it is known to us that the Westerners do not exhibit any great liking or friendship for the Japanese. The Japanese are considered to be very tough negotiators. with whom it is difficult to become friendly. This contrasts with Americans and Europeans with whom Indians generally become friendly and develop social relationships. It is also widely believed that the Japanese are reluctant to transfer technology to their partners, prefer to

keep the control of companies with themselves, and do not mix with the local people. They are assumed to be more interested in exporting components from Japan, rather than promoting localization of production. For the same reasons, it is believed that the Japanese would not give access to training in their works in adequate measure, and would restrict their Indian partners from developing as competitors in the export markets.

Our experience in working with the Japanese in Maruti Udyog Limited is quite different to these popularly held beliefs. We had entered into a joint venture and licence agreements with Suzuki Motor Corporation in October 1982. I was associated with the discussions and negotiations from the very beginning. Earlier, while working with Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHHL), I also had the experience of negotiating technology transfer agreements with several Western countries including the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany. BHEL, in fact, had many ongoing collaborations, mostly with companies from the West, and it is therefore possible to compare what it is like to work with companies from Japan and the Western countries.

Certainly the Japanese are tough negotiators. They, perhaps more than anybody else, prepare very systematically for negotiations. Most Japanese companies have an excellent documentation system, and a methodical record is kept of all previous negotiations. Those entrusted with negotiations carefully study past records, and the experience, both positive and negative, of the working of their agreements. They are thus well prepared with their priorities and fall-back positions.

However, Western companies have also had long experience of negotiating agreements, and it would be incorrect to assume that they are softer, or less concerned about obtaining the best possible terms for their companies. In fact, at times the Westerners drive harder bargains, whereas the Japanese, taking a longer term view, may be more flexible. What makes it easier to negotiate with Western companies is

the language factor. Negotiations with Japanese take longer, because the Japanese do not negotiate in English, and because no one individual would, by himself, take a major decision. The system of consensus decision-making, practised by the Japanese, is more time-consuming. More patience is required in negotiating with the Japanese than with Western companies.

It is also true that the Japanese are slower to develop friendships and do not mix easily with foreigners. Social relationships tend to be different because in the Japanese system, wives do not join parties or functions which are arranged by Japanese companies for their guests. In Western countries ladies are usually present on such occasions and the social atmosphere is thus different

In spite of the inherent slowness in negotiating with the Japanese, the Maruti experience has not been at all unsatisfactory. We issued a Letter of Intent to Suzuki in April 1982, and the licence and joint venture agreements were negotiated and finalized by August 1982, including clearance by the lawyers. This was not a long period by any standard, and because Suzuki appreciated that there was urgency in the starting of this project in India, they made special efforts to accommodate our time schedule.

Maruti's experience with Suzuki in respect of technology transfer and training has been very good and not in conformity with the popular conception in this regard. Suzuki's system of technology transfer has been different from what was experienced with the Western collaborators of BHEL. Whereas in BHEL the collaborator had put limits to the number of man-months of free of cost training at the collaborator's plant, in the case of Suzuki no such limit was imposed. Maruti has so far already availed of 2,361 man-months of training at Suzuki's plants, and the training programme still continues. Suzuki welcomes this, as they believe it pays off in the better working of the joint venture project.

This is an aspect of the Japanese taking a long-term view of business,

as compared to the shorter term approach of the West. The wide exposure of Maruti's manpower to Japanese working conditions and practices has indeed been very helpful in the absorption of technology and inculcating a better attitude to work. This process was further enhanced by Suzuki's decision to despatch experienced supervisors and engineers to impart training to Maruti's workers, supervisors and engineers on the shop floor. Very reasonable charges were levied for such Japanese personnel who came to India, and through these personnel Maruti employees were able to learn many of the shop floor practices which result in better productivity, higher quality and lower down-time. This kind of information is not to be found in any documents, nor has this sort of approach been followed by Western collaborators, who effect technology transfer by sending drawings, calculation sheets, process, etcetera. The results of the Japanese form of technology transfer are apparent from Maruti's working in terms of quality and productivity.

Initially many doubts were expressed by Indian industry that Suzuki would not permit indigenization, and would not transfer technology for this purpose. Maruti has, in fact, attained a high level of indigenization, and there has been very active support from Suzuki in this task. It is true that Japanese vendors were not particularly interested in giving technology to Indian companies, or entering into joint ventures in the first couple of years after our project started. It was only when it became evident that the Maruti project would be a success, and that Maruti was likely to reach a production volume of 100,000 cars a year, that Japanese companies willingly came forward to transfer technology.

Evidently the Japanese vendors did not think it viable to utilize their manpower and time in giving technology for low volume producduction. From a business point of view this is quite rational, and cannot be faulted, since returns from low volume production would be small and not commensurate with the input of resources. A similar approach is, in fact, adopted by Indian companies if they have to

choose where to deploy scarce resources. An Indian vendor prefers to supply to a high volume buyer than to a low volume producer of vehicles.

Suzuki was initially very cautious and conservative in regard to Maruti's desire to enter the export business. They recommended a step by step approach, and suggested that we should first sell cars in neighbouring countries and Eastern Europe, which were not as demanding markets as Western Europe. Once Maruti had gained experience of exporting vehicles, and attained a satisfactory level of quality and cost, we could venture into Western countries. That is the route which has been followed by us with success.

Duzuki has now decided to use Maruti as a production base for a new car model designed primarily for sale in the Western European markets. There are not many Western companies who have decided to utilize their Indian licencees, or joint ventures, as a production base for a sophisticated manufactured product, which would be sold through their own sales network in their home Our experience shows markets. that Suzuki is not averse to exports being made by Maruti, but wishes to ensure that the products meet international standards, and do not bring a bad name either to Suzuki or Maruti.

The Japanese in general, and Suzuki in particular, are very cost conscious. They make continuous efforts to reduce costs through KAIZEN activities, as well as management actions. Their success in this direction was demonstrated when the Japanese dealt with the impact of the oil shocks in the 1970s and again when the yen strengthened by about 100% against the dollar. Despite this, the Japanese maintained their exports and international competitiveness. In Maruti, the project implementation was so planned that no capital investment remained unutilized for even a few weeks, and full capacity utilization was achieved within a few months. This was achieved by first installing the down-stream facilities, and then moving progressively to up-stream facilities. The production capacity

was also increased in stages. In the expansion project, which Maruti is now undertaking, Suzuki is actively involved in finding ways of minimizing capital expenditure.

In day-to-day operations, attention is paid to such aspects as' the location of materials stores so as to. minimize movement of components to the line, opening more doors between buildings so as to avoid forklifts having to travel longer distances, rearranging racks and shelves, etcetera. The concept of open offices is also a way of reducing the cost. The Japanese are particularly strong in making maximum use of space. Factories in Japan appear much more cramped than those in Western countries. Working with the Japanese will undoubtedly result in Indian counterparts having to drastically revise their concepts about buildings, utilization of space, and the ways of effecting cost reduc-

Japanese companies do not believe in paying high dividends. The profits generated by a company are utilized to improve production facilities, so that quality can improve and costs can come down. This, again, is a manifestation of their long-term approach to industrial activity, and they believe that an undue concern with high dividends and quarterly earnings per share is likely to be detrimental to the growth of the company. These concepts will also be new to most Indians who work with the Japanese.

One of the most significant aspects of working with the Japanese is that they attach very high importance to developing good communication and confidence between top people in the Indian and Japanese companies. The entire success of Japan in developing their economy, and making their industry highly competitive, is based on management practices which have harnessed the full potential of their employees for attaining corporate objectives. With this experience, it is not surprising that Japanese companies should attempt to follow a similar system with the people with whom they work in foreign countries. The Japanese believe that if good understanding is developed between the

partners, the company would do well. They are then willing to give every possible assistance and help, even if such help is outside the terms of their licence agreement.

In a joint venture, the Japanese are keen to introduce the successful principles of management practised by them in Japan. Thus, the Japanese stress the need for team work, and effective two-way communication at all levels within a company. They encourage all employees to participate in decision-making, and to make suggestions for making improvements which would reduce cost or improve quality. The management undertakes programmes to train employees on how to identify problems, and make suggestions for solving those problems. Rewards are based on performance and practices are introduced to increase employee commitment to the company.

Irderliness and method are of prime importance in the work place. The Japanese believe that cleanliness is essential for quality. They also believe that unless a person has done a job himself, he is not likely to be able to either bring about improvements in the way of working, or supervise people who are doing that job. Even very senior Japanese engineers and managers have no hesitation in working with their own hands, and this makes them much more action-oriented than theoretical. They do not spend as much time on academic discussions as we do. They also believe that to take effective decisions, a manager should go to the site of action and take decisions after personally checking the facts.

Some of the reasons for Japanese success has been their reliance on developing systems for every activity, keeping meticulous records of all discussions and experiences, and a very effective system for retrieval of information. The training programmes emphasize the need for discipline in following systems. As a result, they make fewer mistakes, and individuals become less important for consistency of performance. The availability of recorded information, and the Japanese penchant for hard work, ensures that they are fully prepared and aware of all relevant facts relating to any issue. Human error is thus minimized.

The Japanese attach a great deal of importance to the commitments they make. Failing to fulfil a promise entails loss of face. This makes them very reliable partners and suppliers. It would be very rare indeed for a Japanese to not keep to a promised time schedule. Japanese punctuality is, in fact, proverbial. Even at a social function, it is not unusual for a Japanese to arrive five minutes before the appointed time. In working with them, therefore, it is important to be conscious of this aspect of their character.

hey also prefer to be straightforward in their dealings. They do not at all mind if one tells them of the problems which are likely to arise in any particular task that is being undertaken. In fact, they are suspicious when somebody responds with 'no problem' to a task which may be entrusted to him. The Japanese do not mind people making mistakes, because they treat mistakes as the best way of learning. However, they do expect that the same mistake will not be repeated, and that suitable corrections in the system will be made to prevent mistakes from recurring.

In foreign countries the Japanese do not mix particularly well with the local population. They tend to keep to themselves, and to have their own social activities. However, though it may take time, it is possible to become good friends with them.

It is likely that in the coming years, Indians will have many opportunities to work with the Japanese, either as partners or as employees of a Japanese company. In the United States, it has been found that American employees of Japanese companies seem to be more productive and happier than when working for an American management. The Japanese managements show greater concern for their employees, and their participative style management wins loyalty. Differentials between the top management and workers is also not so large. Perhaps many of these concepts would also help Indian industry in becoming more productive and attaining a higher level of quality in the years to come.

# Motivating the line worker

RAJA VENKATARAMANI

JAPAN today is not only an economic and industrial superpower, it is also the world's largest creditor nation. Smaller in size than California, Japan has worked its way to its present position in less than 50 years after its utter defeat and the enormous devastation it suffered during the Second World War. 'How Japan did it' is an issue that is widely discussed around the world. The Japanese themselves do not say much about it. Unlike us, they prefer to maintain a low profile and eschew boastfulness, and they abhor smugness. They choose to talk more about problems and deficiencies yet to be overcome than about 'achievements' yet to materialize. The Japanese firmly believe that concrete achievements will speak for themselves, and that enhanced commitment and efforts to meet more challenging goals are indispensable for the welfare of their country.

Some years ago, in an article entitled 'Duty Despite Tragedy', a Japanese newspaper reporter described the scene in the automobile plant of Maruti Udyog, Gurgaon, when the news that Prime Minister

Indira Gandhi had been assassinated was announced. Amidst the turmoil that the shocking news created, Akira Shinohara, the man deputed by the Suzuki Motor Company of Japan to serve as Maruti's Director (Production), said: 'Whatever happens, we'll make fine cars. That is our duty.'

Shinohara spoke the language of a samurai. 'Scratch a Japanese of the most advanced ideas, and he will show a samurai,' wrote the eminent scholar, Inaze Nitobe, 87 years ago. According to Japanese lore, the actions and responses of the samurai, the warrior knight, are guided by the unwritten code of Bushido.

Does the samurai spirit in present-day Japan animate only 'men of the most advanced ideas' occupying high positions, like Akira Shinohara? What, for instance, would have been Shinohara's response had he been just a worker on the assembly line? Inaze Nitobe claimed that the spirit of Bushido permeated all classes of people. It 'acted as a leaven among the masses,

furnishing a moral standard for the whole people'. He predicted that the Japanese would not dissipate the 'inalienable gift of the ancestors' represented by Zen Buddhism, the teachings of Confucius and Mencius, and the unwritten knightly code of Bushido. The savant was confident that 'the summons of the future will be to widen its scope as to apply it to all walks and relations of life'.

The 'stored wisdom of the past' is creatively adapted by the Japanese of all classes to meet the exigencies of a given time. But there is a second important factor in the 'conditioning' of the Japanese people that needs to be borne in mind. Living in relatively small, isolated islands and confronting recurrent natural calamities such as earthquakes, tidal waves, typhoons, and volcanic eruptions, the Japanese have, over the centuries learned how to cope with the problems of physical survival and revival. After a disaster, one picks up the pieces and strives as best as one can to rebuild one's life.

ooperation and teamwork are considered by them as being imperative in putting a community back on its feet after a natural calamity. It is their basic conviction, evolved through long years of experience, that hard work alone will enable them to respond to crises and to rebuild subsequently the community and the nation. Their cultural upbringing and long-prevailing conditioning have, according to a perceptive analyst, Konichi Ohmae, permanently implanted in the Japanese mind a strong belief that if the work ethic should ever deteriorate, the nation's future would be dark.

With limited arable land and a meagre endowment of vital minerals and raw materials, survival for the Japanese depends not only on sustained hard work but also on the efficacious harnessing of technology, including a ceaseless quest for improving it in order to derive maximum use from scarce resources. These beliefs, born of the experience of living in a harsh environment, impel the Japanese to regard any sort of waste as being sinful and sacrilegious. They goad the people into making the most efficient use of available

resources and to reflect and experiment on new ways of reducing waste and improving performance. Inculcated in them is the habit of scouting around for innovative practices that are seen to produce good results. Kaoru Kobayashi, a leading management consultant, explains that when the Japanese encounter a worthwhile idea that may have originated elsewhere, they promptly take note of it, study it carefully, 'make a creative misunderstanding' to add a few extra touches, and modify their own system to bring about improvement.

Ahe greatest calamity to strike the Japanese in their entire history was their military defeat in the Second World War and the occupation of the country by the victorious American forces. The Japanese drew on 'the stored wisdom of the past' to respond to the challenge and they steeled themselves to spare no efforts to restore Japan's honour among the nations of the world. They had the temperament and the 'conditioning' to work resolutely for survival and revival. At school, teachers had drilled into Japanese children stories like the one about Shimpai Goto who was Mayor of Tokyo at the time of the great earthquake of 1923.

According to the story, Goto had told the people of Tokyo: 'We are not going to rebuild the past. Not rebuilding, but building anew.' The story of Shimpai Goto rose vividly in the mind of 20-year old Makota Kikuchi as he trudged along the streets of a devastated Tokyo on the day of Japan's unconditional surrender. The youngster concluded that it was his duty to work hard to raise his motherland to a position of greatness. Makoto Kikuchi was to become an internationally renowned authority on microelectronics and director of the Sony Research Institute. That his countrymen were imbued with a similar resolve is amply illustrated by their performance in the years that followed.

The way of the sword had failed the samurai. The sword, the quintessential symbol of Bushido, and swordsmanship itself, was to be replaced by the machine and by technology. The khaki uniform of the military had served the nation poorly and was to be stowed away, yielding primacy to the overalls of Japanese workers and technologists and the business suits of the new knights of industry and commerce. They would not rest till the label 'Made in Japan' commanded worldwide appreciation and extracted respect from those who had humbled Japan with fire and atom bombs. The stored wisdom of the past was to yield new definitions of duty, loyalty and patriotism that would inspire the people to work hard individually and cooperatively in groups.

The best known Japanese corporation in India is the Suzuki Motor Company (sMc). Among the nine Japanese automobile producers, Suzuki, Daihatsu, and Isuzu are the smallest. In a fiercely competitive market, small companies have to find and hold on to some particular niche, and motivate its employees to attain such high levels of efficiency and economy as to survive the onslaught of much stronger rivals. Some years ago, commentators on the global automobile industry like Tadashi Kume of Honda, Lee Iacocca of Chrysler, and John Taylor of Fortune magazine predicted that 'bit players' like Suzuki would face an increasingly tough time and would be swallowed up by one or another of the giants. However, under the dynamic and intrepid leadership of Osamu Suzuki, smc has not only been able to survive but to live up to one of its slogans: The Suzuki spirit thrives on new challenges and higher goals.'

Osamu Suzuki worked out major joint ventures abroad with two very dissimilar partners — the untied public sector Maruti Udyog of India, and General Motors, Canada, a subsidiary of the largest car maker in the world. SMC tells itself, its executives, and the world that it has been able not only to survive but to thrive because of the dedication and efficiency of its workers who sweat it out on the shopfloor.

Every new employee of the Suzuki Motor Company is solemnly exhorted to understand that his acceptance of employment means acceptance of membership in an organization whose primary purpose is to pursue the highest possible effi-

ciency'. On the commitment of every worker to that basic goal would depend the prosperity or the decline of the institution. Such a commitment can only be fostered, smc believes, if every employee has a clear perception of the company's business objectives, the challenges it faces, the competition that it confronts, and the imperative requirements for its progress in the future. The company and its workers share a common destiny. It is up to the workers to ensure that this destiny comprises progress and prosperity. At Suzuki all members raise their abilities by themselves and advance ahead,' a company document states.

Are these merely pretty words churned out by skilled and highly paid public relations men or advertising agencies? The answer has to be sought in smc's record in industrial relations. There has been no strike or lockout in the Suzuki Motor Company ever since it began making automobiles over 30 years ago. 'Absenteeism' is an unknown phenomenon. Its workers regard punctuality in attendance and putting in a full day's work as 'a moral obligation'. According to long established tradition, Suzuki executives regard it as their duty to be at their desks 'at least 30 minutes before other employees show up and to work overtime for at least two hours every day'.

The company proudly claims that apart from paid annual holidays, an employee is absent from work on only one working day a year. The company has not sought to influence employee behaviour through stringent regulations and stern penalties for infractions. It claims to be guided by the maxim: trust begets trust. Twenty-five years ago, smc told its employees that it had decided to dispense with time-clocks and that they no longer would need time-cards to record their arrival and departure.

To promote greater awareness of their stake in the health of the organization SMC provides every employee with carefully prepared and easy-to-read instructional material. A key passage expounds the raison d'etre for SMC's existence and workers' membership in the organization:

Suzuki is making automobiles, motor cycles, marine products etc. These are the activities of Suzuki as a business. Business activities are a kind of economic activity. A business concern is a living organism; sometimes it grows and sometimes it can get sick. To promote healthy growth, the business must always maintain a constitution enabling it to produce profit. Otherwise, if even a slight downturn occurs. the business uses up its physical stamina and may run the risk of fading away. It may be said, therefore, that the objective of Suzuki's business activities is to maintain a long term of stability to produce as much profit as possible'.

The company believes that a worker who becomes aware of his personal stake in keeping it healthy will be a conscientious worker. Its next step is to alert every employee to the risks that can arise with any weakening of the company's position in the harsh and competitive environment of the market. A Suzuki manual tells workers:

In the modern automobile industry, fierce competition is developing on a worldwide scale. In order to ensure the Company's development under such conditions, the fight cannot be waged by the Company President and the directors, or the so-called managers.... If we are to win out in the competition among enterprises, we must make our Company better than the others.

In conveying to workers the view that the company cannot hope to fight the competition merely with 'so-called managers' SMC seeks to counter feelings of hostility on the part of shopfloor workers towards management'. In his Detroit 1985, Donald MacDonald notes that the major preoccupation of workers in American automobile plants was how to make life easier for themselves by pulling the wool over the minions of 'management'. "Fuck the management" was an all-consuming goal that united blacks and whites. men and women...' he observes. smc safeguards itself from such a situation, as will be explained subsequently, by acclaiming the shopfloor

worker as the hero and kingpin of the whole organization who makes possible the profits that ensure the company's growth.

There is also an attempt to make workers understand the reasons why a 'chain of command' is necessary for the smooth and efficient functioning of the organization. While stressing the need for the avoidance of actions that may disrupt this chain of command, SMC's instructional literature emphasizes that every employee, regardless of his position in the chain, should 'respect a fellow worker's professional knowledge, experience and character'. A worker can only benefit if he 'looks up to elders and seniors with a feeling and attitude of respect': at the same time, the worker should not hesitate to state his own opinions with frank-

Lt may be of some interest to cite here the 9-point procedure for 'taking orders' that Suzuki workers are trained to follow. 'When called, reply "yes sir" at once and go cheerfully and briskly to the person giving the order. Listen carefully to the end of the order: do not say anything during that time. Listen carefully to the object of the task and understand points like urgency and priority as also where, when, how, and with whom the task is to be performed. Ask questions if any points in the order are ambiguous or indistinct and ensure that the full intent of the person giving the order is understood. Repeat the important points and confirm that you have understood them correctly. Take into consideration the contents of the order, the time allocated for its performance, and your own capabilities, and do not accept the order lightheartedly. If you have any opinions, explain briefly with frankness and modesty. If you receive an order from somebody who is not your immediate superior, always consult your immediate superior and act in accordance with his directions'.

Having followed the procedure in receiving an order, the worker has the responsibility of completing the prescribed task and also an obligation to report such completion promptly. 'No matter how simple the task may be, a report should be

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made to the superior so that he can know the situation'. Interim reports should be made if difficulties are faced, a longer time is required, or when the worker feels that the task 'cannot be done by the indicated policy and method'. The company thus tries to bolster the self-esteem of workers by acknowledging their capacity to have opinions of their own and encouraging them to voice them frankly even if they relate to the 'policy and method' of a task assigned by a superior.

Lt is believed that the level of performance of workers will be decisively influenced by the calibre of the supervisor (foreman) who guides them and by their confidence in the technical skill, professional competence, and sense of fairness of the foreman. The company's instructional literature proclaims that the foreman is 'the pivot in workshop operation' and should be regarded as a 'frontline manager'. Supervisors are management men who make their workshops superior to those of our competitors', runs an smc slogan. Conscious of the fact that in the United States and in many other countries, shopfloor workers harbour considerable resentment against the authoritarian attitude of foremen, the company defines a good foreman as one who evokes enthusiastic cooperation from workers under his charge.

The company makes it unambiguously clear that high among the prescribed responsibilities of a foreman is the maintenance of a good morale among the workers. Are the workers happy with him and are they animated by the determination to produce for him the best possible results? The key test of a foreman's competence is whether the workers believe that they get fair and courteous treatment from him. A second test is whether the workers are encouraged by the foreman, to express their opinions freely. The record of the foreman in eliciting and recognizing good ideas from his workers and taking action in respect of increased productivity, quality improvement, and cost reduction constitutes the third test of his capability. In the smc framework, a foreman is expected to conduct himself in such a way as to be looked upon by his workers as a friend, philosopher and guide.

Several years ago, Kaoru Ishikawa, a pioneer of the quality circle movement in Japan, formulated the slogan: 'Quality Circle memberslet's study'. In one of his recent works he notes that throughout Japan it is apparent that factory workers have the desire to study. SMC fosters this trend and exhorts workers to make even their leisuretime activities purposeful. A Suzuki manual tells workers that viewing television just for the fun of it will make a man a passive being, bereft of independent thinking. If, however, television is viewed selectively and purposefully for improving one's mind and deepening one's knowledge, the time spent on it can be beneficial. The company calls upon workers to reflect on the even greater benefits of developing the reading habit. While television viewing is like eating mush, reading provides wholesome and tougher food that cannot be digested unless one chews on it. 'Reading is absolutely necessary; the hardship and effort expended on reading a worthwhile book will deepen our understanding of its contents and becomes excellent food for our mind,' the manual states.

Given his commitment to purposeful activity, including the reading habit, the Suzuki worker is fully capable of being an 'ideas man' and making himself a more valuable asset to his group and to the company itself, smc holds. It also calls upon the worker to reflect on the benefits that he will derive through effective contribution to his quality circle and other small group activities. He can experience the joy of taking up problems independently and working out solutions'. Recognition of the worth of his suggestions from his colleagues will surely strengthen his self-esteem. Ideas put forth by fellow-workers will enable him to broaden and deepen his own knowledge and skills. Improved human relations will reduce strain and brighten his workplace, the company suggests.

Acknowledging the sincerity and commitment of the workers and acclaiming their determination to improve their skills, the company

places in their hands a very comprehensive document entitled the 'Suzuki Production System'. The document gives detailed instructions and suggestions concerning every facet of the production process and several related issues like productivity, quality improvement and cost reduction. Pointing out that these instructions and suggestions represent the best thinking available to it, the company exhorts workers to adhere to them scrupulously.

At the same time it calls upon them to give serious thought to possible improvements of the Suzuki production system in their respective areas of operation. The point is thus conveyed to the shopfloor workers that they have an important role to play in the vital process of continuous improvement'. Simultaneously, the equally important point is driven home that if their commitment to continuous improvement were to slacken and if a competitor were to put in place a manufacturing system superior to that of Suzuki, the company's position in the market would deteriorate and profits plunge downwards.

The assembly line man, tied to monotonous, repetitive work, often feels resentful towards white-collar employees and executives in threepiece suits. He feels that they look down upon him, and indeed they often tend to do so. Some of the steps that the Suzuki Motor Company takes to bolster the worker's sense of self-esteem and thereby elicit superior performance from him have already been described. The discussion can be concluded with yet another illustration of the Suzuki method. The company proclaims that the worker involved in the manufacturing process is the true source of its profits and is, therefore, the guarantor of its well-being. It calls upon all categories of employees to reflect on the following two equations:

Lead time=working time+standing time
Standing time=handling time+
inspection time

It explains that the period from the moment a worker touches the raw material till the moment when the finished car rolls out of the assembly

line ready for sale, constitutes 'lead time'. All activities of employees other than those involved in the actual manufacturing process represent 'standing time'. They push up the cost of the product manufactured by the company, and can only be characterized as 'necessary but not valuable work'.

According to the SMC manual: 'The time which is profitable is the "working time" alone, the others being those which only push up the cost.' That work alone can truly be regarded as 'valuable work' which involves the actual production of a product of value by the company for which the customer pays money. QED: It is the shopfloor worker who performs 'valuable' work. The activities of all other members of the organization constitute only 'necessary' but not 'valuable' work.

The company tops off its efforts with appeals to patriotism and the pride of workers. They are told that the tremendous achievements of Japan have been made possible by the skill, dedication and efforts of its working men. Suzuki's members are respected participants in a great national effort. As has been stated in an SMC document:

The reason why Japanese products are very highly evaluated in the world at present is because Japanese products are everywhere recognized as superior to those of every other country in the world. The greatest cause of this happy situation is the high quality of persons working in Japan's factories. For the Japanese worker there is no such thing as being negligent about even the smallest aspect of the production process. Moreover, our workers themselves spontaneously come up with ideas and efforts to launch still better products. These are the factors that have enabled Japanese industry to occupy an outstanding position in the world. To ensure that Suzuki attains even greater approbation in the world, the members of the Suzuki family should improve the quality of their individual work and validate the motto: Suzuki products are value-packed products.

Does the Japanese approach, as exemplified by the Suzuki Motor Company, have any lessons to offer to Indian industries? Some may take the position that we need no lessons from anyone. They enjoy strutting around in their own backyard, oblivious to what others may be doing and achieving. Korea and Taiwan do not seem to have done badly by emulating certain Japanese practices. Even the mighty General Motors of the United States acknowledges that it has 'Japonized' its operations for the production of a new 'world car' the Saturn.

The Japanese have reached their present position by looking out for good ideas wherever they may have originated, adapting them to meet their requirements, and drawing inspiration from the 'stored wisdom' of their past. Putting their nation's progress at the top of their agenda, employers and workers have sought to establish a cooperative relationship based on mutual respect, trust and fair play. The results are there for all to see.

With some honourable exceptions, our industrialists and labour leaders have so far not found it possible to place India's progress at the top of their agenda. In their own respective ways, they seek to exploit workers for their narrow ends. They do not seem to be troubled by the fact that several countries which, but a few years ago, were behind India in industrial development, have been transforming themselves into 'tigers' and 'dragons'.

The Indian worker is a conscientious, 'god-fearing' person who will respond well to fair treatment. Despite the fact that he is exploited and treated with scant respect, he has shown remarkable resistance to swallowing the alien dogma of 'class war'. Accord him respect, treat him fairly, give him his just due and appeal to his patriotism: the Indian worker will prove that he is second to none in the world. Gandhiji's concept of 'trusteeship', long exiled from India, needs to be brought home from Japan and adapted suitably to inaugurate a new era in our country's industrial and human resource development.

# A learning experience

VIKRAM LAL

THE 1970s and 1980s were years when many an Indian company felt that it had finally 'arrived'. Manufacturers were confident of what they considered acceptable levels of product quality, productivity and other measurable attributes. Those who had started in the 1950s and 1960s had, in many cases, already been through equipment replacement programmes. Attention was turning increasingly to the market and to new product development.

Just then came the great wave of competition, though at somewhat different times for different industry segments. Nevertheless, it could be said that by the late 1980s, there was virtually no industry left (except public sector monopolies) that was not in a highly competitive market. The resultant pressure and its unhappy impact on market shares and profits forced managements to look around for new solutions, and many turned to the much-talkedabout Japanese management system and tried to implement it in some form or other, with varying degrees of success.

The history of the new paradigms in management has received considerable intellectual and media attention over the past few years, so I will only touch upon it briefly to put the Eicher experience in context. Post-war Japan desperately needed to export, and Japanese industry found that the greatest impediment was the quality of its goods. Forty years ago it invited two American consultants, W. Edwards Deming and J.M. Juran, to advise them on what they should do. Heads of Japanese

industry listened to them carefully and took them very seriously. They implemented their advice systematically over the next two decades or so, and the rest is history. Whereas Deming and Juran were put on high pedestals in Japan, no one of any consequence adopted their teachings in their own country in those years. It is only the introspection forced on the US and European industry by the Japanese high quality and low cost product onslaught that has now put them on a similar path.

The Japanese system, or Total Quality Management (TOM) as it is known by many, consists of a bundle of new paradigms, which require everyone, starting at the very top, to rethink just about everything. The most fundamental paradigm shift is from 'managing is a job' to 'managing is through leadership and is a way of life, because it requires each person to do two things. It requires one to reduce the size of one's ego, and to increase the importance of all others in one's mind.'

This is quite similar to the Hindu concept of the attainment of spiritual objectives through Karma Yoga (the selfiess pursuit of one's duties). Total Quality Management requires that we serve all our external and internal customers with a substantially diminished sense of our own importance, or our own indispensability.

External customers are the final users of our product (or service) together with the various intermediaries such as stockists, wholesalers and dealers. This term also encompasses suppliers, banks and all other

business associates. It even includes, for aspects such as pollution, product safety etcetera, such groups as society in general, and government.

Internal customers are, for any individual, all the people or departments that he has to deal with inside his own organization. The term 'customer' in this usage does not mean a buyer of the product. It is used to elevate all those we deal with to the level of a customer, who must be treated with the greatest respect and consideration. From my personal experience I can say that the implementation of this change is by far the most difficult one, even after its rightness or need has been intellectually accepted.

The second paradigm, 'Marketing's assignment is to sell what is being produced' changes to 'the organization must accurately assess the customer's need and then go about satisfying him'. Even in highly competitive markets like the US and Europe, it has come as a shock that the customer was not being listened to. Examples are the automobile, the consumer electronics and the photographic equipment industries, where the Japanese have made major inroads.

In India the situation is that serious competition is a fairly new circumstance, and many were hoping until the recent liberalization that 'the good old days' of a sellers' market may yet come back! That is apparently not to be, and hence it is becoming increasingly difficult to go on selling something simply because you have been doing so for a long time. It is now imperative that everyone looks at the user as the raison d'etre of a business enterprise. It is he who is the reason for our existence and the source of our prosperity. If we don't please him, someone else will.

According to paradigm three, 'Workers are just hands and feet—they have to be told what to do, when to do it, how to do it. They need not know why they are doing it, and, above all, they must never change anything. It needs a long engineering education and years of managerial experience to do that.' This attitude of all managers and

engineers stems from the scientific management principles of Taylor, which are now totally outdated. The new paradigm reads: 'The potential in each human being is enormous and is just waiting to be used. The feelings and the brain of each person are the most important, not the hands and feet. He is best equipped to make improvements at his workplace because he knows it best. If his achievements are recognized, his ability and willingness to contribute will increase manifold.'

The change required here is to treat each employee as a whole human being rather than as one with a very limited purpose. In the Indian context, it is also necessary to ensure that each employee is literate and is capable of undergoing training in the various simple analytical tools that are needed in any workplace. My own assessment is that this new paradigm is probably the most important in changing the organization, and in improving the well-being of employees.

'People don't like to work or to produce good quality, and will always do as little as possible unless they have strong supervision or incentives.' This fourth paradigm is related to the previous one, and has been changed radically to: 'People enjoy working and producing good quality if they are trained properly, are given responsibility and authority to make changes at their workplace, and are treated with respect.'

An additional condition is that the workplace should be fit for human beings, and that the job must not make him work like an animal of burden, which unfortunately is still very often the case. In other words, a worker should not be used simply as a source of physical power. All persons enjoy making improvements if such improvements are implemented quickly and are also recognized. No one really likes to produce poor quality. This happens only when the person is alienated from the organization, and does not identify with it.

The fifth paradigm, 'Quality is the headache of the quality control (Qc) department', has changed to 'Quality is everyone's responsibility, and

principally of the producer's.' In an old-style plant, the production department considers it a challenge to somehow get its output accepted by Qc. Theirs is a truly adversarial relationship. Very often, Production will stock rejections until there is a shortage, when top management may force Qc to accept such material. Suppliers play the same game to get their rejects accepted.

Top quality cannot be produced under such circumstances. For that, quality has to become each and everyone's active responsibility, whether he is a salesman, a service mechanic, an accounts clerk or a security guard. But most of all it becomes the responsibility of the workman who is actually producing. In the new system, the production workman checks his own output, maintains a control chart, corrects the process and so maintains quality. QC then becomes an audit function that analyzes trends, develops quality systems, and calibrates guages etcetera.

Paradigm six, 'Good housekeeping is nice but not important,' has become: 'Top quality cannot be produced without excellent housekeeping', and paradigm seven, 'A reasonable inventory of raw material, as well as at various stages of processing, is essential to avoid production stoppages,' has become: 'The lower the sustainable level of inventory the more efficient is the production process, the target for inventory being zero.'

'Economic batch quantity is calculated from the set-up time and inventory carrying cost. Generally speaking, production is best served by large batch sizes.' This eighth paradigm now reads: 'The target is a batch size of one, where set-up times have been made insignificant. Hence no inventory needs to be carried out, and there is total flexibility between models.'

Paradigm nine, 'A good performance appraisal system is the basis for all decisions on increments, promotions and development. It gives clarity on what is expected of each person, and where he has failed or succeeded. It can be ensured that appraisals are generally objective

and competent,' has now become: 'Appraisals are always inaccurate and subjective, and cause great tension and heart-burning. Both appraiser and appraiser have great difficulty with the process, and it must be eliminated.'

Paradigm ten, 'Strong incentives for quantity produced or quotas negotiated with the union are essential to make people work. Quality can be taken care of through inspection,' now reads: 'Good quality cannot be produced if incentives or quotas for production are in place.' And finally, paradigm eleven, 'Suppliers are a necessary evil and never to be trusted. Always have two or more suppliers for every item, and take every opportunity to squeeze them on price, because they will inevitably do the same with you,' has changed to 'Choose suppliers with whom you can build a long-term trust relationship. Have a single source for each item so that you can work with him on technology, quality and cost.'

Anyone familiar with manufacturing will immediately understand that manufacturing as understood earlier has been stood on its head. It will take any experienced engineer or manager a long time to completely accept even one of these new paradigms, let alone all of them.

Licher has been producing tractors at its original plant in Faridabad since 1960. With only very brief hiccups, the tractor industry remained in a solid sellers' market right until 1981-82. We, along with many others, were guilty of hiding behind this artificial barrier and not giving the customer what he deserved. But at the same time, being an engineer myself, I could not accept poor quality, and was therefore constantly searching for ways to effect improvements.

At that time, in the mid-1970s, I believed that if we told our workmen and supervisors sincerely and often that good quality was needed, they would produce it. Each campaign had a positive impact, but most of it was temporary. There was improvement, but only of the kind that could be ensured through inspection. Exhortations continued, because we

still believed that quality is 'their' problem, not ours.

The next phase in our quality history was that if there is a problem, let us change the design. This caused considerable friction between Product Engineering (PE) and Manufacturing, because the buck was seen to be passed to the former for no fault of theirs. PE felt (and rightly in most cases) that Manufacturing was unable to meet specifications, and was therefore trying to change designs or loosen specifications. In some cases, top management more or less forced PE to relent, and this remained a major cause for battle until recently.

The third phase was the hardware phase. We realized that workmen were not serious about quality because they did not see management being serious about it. Management did not replace equipment even when it no longer produced the required quality. The workplaces were ill-lit, with broken floors. Material was often damaged due to poor handling. Proper tools and guages were not made available to workmen, and worst of all, rejected material was accepted from vendors when there were shortages.

The list was long and indisputable. At this stage we decided that if management played its part properly, it would then be able to persuade workmen to manufacture to specification. On this basis we developed a series of modernization projects through which we upgraded machinery and all other hardware in Eicher's three tractor-related plants.

Coinciding and overlapping with the hardware modernization phase was the strong influence exercised by our Japanese connection. From around 1985 onwards, Eicher was deeply involved in implementing a ioint venture with Mitsubishi Motors Corporation to manufacture state-of-the-art light commercial vehicles at a new plant in Pithampur, near Indore. We started sending people to train in Japan in 1985 and commercial production began in 1986. Eicher executives trained in Japan were the carriers of a radically new message, a new system of manufacturing, and a new set of guidelines for managing a plant.

The management of the new plant was allowed to implement the new system, but the rest of the Eicher organization were somewhat sceptical of the new paradigms being established. For instance, some felt that a single canteen hall for all employees was something of a gimmick; or that the extraordinary stress on housekeeping was highly exaggerated; or that no incentives for production may be alright in the beginning, but would the workmen deliver when the demand increased?

I estimate that it took us around two years to understand the huge step forward we had taken in our Pithampur LCV plant. We were producing quality comparable to the Japanese, and were operating a system that had no similarity with the one we were used to. The obvious next step was to implement the new system in our three older plants. However, the task seemed almost impossible because of the enormous gulf separating the two systems in every respect: people's habits, equipment, processes, expectations.

During this period many senior people in our company attended seminars, lectures and workshops on anything to do with quality. This exposure, along with our direct contact with Japanese methods, enabled us to chart what we considered to be the most suitable route to worldclass quality for Eicher, which was the adoption of Total Quality Management (TOM) based on the three pillars of Total Employee Involvement (THI), Total Quality Control (roc) and Just in Time manufacturing (JIT). We were fortunate that, just as we were coming to this conclusion, we found the right person to guide us and to facilitate this tremendous change process. It is interesting that our new advisor was an Indian with experience in implementing such change under adverse circumstances in a US company. Although much of his inspiration came from the Japanese, the outlook was much more international and therefore directly adaptable to India.

The implementation of TQM in Eicher started at the top. The senior-most group of around 25 people underwent a three-day TQM awareness programme, which was interest-

ing and exciting. But the next couple of months proved to be increasingly disappointing: I was waiting for something to happen, or for concrete steps in the plan, but there was nothing forthcoming. All that was done was that more senior executives went through the same three-day programme, and persons from each division were trained to enable them to run the programme at their own locations.

But then things did start happening, although in a small way. Once a critical mass of trained or 'TOM aware' people in a division had been reached, they started activities that appealed to them the most. By and large these were initially in the 'employee involvement' area. The single most dramatic activity in the earlier phase was housekeeping. This was something that everyone could do. and could gain from, in the sense of improving his own environment. Floors, machines, racks and desks were cleaned and painted, signboards were put up. Tons of scrap in the form of rejected material, unusable machines, old records, broken furniture and obsolete components were sold. It suddenly dawned on everyone that, at no cost at all, people had much cleaner, brighter workplaces of which they could be proud, and as a bonus in most places, some space had become available.

Housekeeping seems a very small and easy step, yet it caused each one to feel that 'we can do it'. But even housekeeping is not easy to maintain unless habits have been formed and expectations raised. To do this, managers as leaders have to set examples. Not only must they follow the rules of housekeeping, they must look after the details. If anyone sees a piece of paper on the floor, he is expected to pick it up and throw it in the waste basket. If a table is out of line, he should immediately set it right. My experience is that it is rarely needed after an initial period, but it must be done whenever the occasion arises.

Kaizen, which is a Japanese word for 'continuous improvement', was the next important step. Employees were encouraged to make suggestions for improvement at their own workplaces. The crucial step was to immediately implement them. It is interesting that people rarely made stupid or frivolous suggestions. Whenever implementation was quick, the process snowballed. More and more suggestions came in. However, once the novelty wore off, the trend reversed, causing considerable consternation. What was now needed was recognition. It was not enough to empower people to make changes. It was essential that achievements be recognized.

At first, senior people were shown the improvements and they congratulated those concerned. But then it was found that recognition itself needed to be institutionalized. Boards were installed on which a description of each kaizen along with the person's photograph were displayed. Presentations of the best kaizens were made in front of the plant's managers. And finally, the best few of each division were shown to top management at a special occasion. No money has been paid for improvements, even when benefits to the organization have been large. Whenever the process has been finetuned, it has been found that the number of kaizens show a dramatic jump, from 20 or 30 a month to 300 and more. Divisions have set themselves targets of one suggestion per employee per month.

Improvements have resulted in solving many chronic problems, reducing fatigue, cycle-time and wastage, and in improving quality. Over a period of two years these have lead to major changes in quality and productivity. Since Eicher has a long-standing policy that it will not reduce manpower even if surpluses are generated, employees do not feel threatened by productivity improvements.

Manpower productivity in India has been very poor for a long time, primarily because of low wages, but also because the sellers' market forced the customer to pay for all inefficiencies. Whereas the public sector was always commented upon for its poor productivity record, the fact is that much of the private sector performed similarly, with only a few organizations being distinctly superior. My own assessment is that

the average workman in a typical Indian factory works for four to five hours in a normal eight-hour shift.

We tried to change this condition over the years, but with little success. It is true that incentives on output stabilized productivity, but I do not think it ever became necessary for workmen to work more than five hours. The workman's belief is that management extracts work from him, and that by giving it he gets poorer physically, for which he is compensated by a wage. He sees it in his interest to get away with as little as possible. Hence fixing of informal maximum quotas in a factory is quite normal, and those who disregard them are dealt with severely by their peers. All this is seen as self-defence in the battle for survival.

On the other hand, large investments are made in factories, and if these are not properly utilized, it is a loss for the organization and the nation. We learned from our new Japanese LCV plant in Pithampur that work did not have to be hard. The workmen at this plant were not made to lift heavy weights, nor to walk great distances. Even if some people did have tiring jobs, enough rest time was built into the process.

It was clear to us that the old system had to change in our older plants, otherwise TQM could not really be implemented. Luckily, an opportunity opened up at the Faridabad tractor plant. Although the whole plant was being modernized, it was being done in stages, and the first department to be taken up was the transmission assembly. The new assembly line was patterned after the system prevalent in the LCV plant. Well before the equipment arrived, the executives, supervisors and 18 of the best workmen were selected and put through offline training. They were sent to Pithampur to carefully study work methods, storage systems, material handling and, above all, the 'kanban' system, which is a very effective Japanese method of using display cards.

The assembly line was then installed, and as a first step, the executives and supervisors commissioned it themselves. In that process they found and corrected many problems, until they could produce at the specified rate. Workmen were then trained on the line and they made many further improvements right from the beginning. While training at Pithampur, they had decided to work for the full seven-and-a-half hours and to always wear their new uniforms, something that the normal Faridabad workmen did only off and on.

The small group of 18 workmen stood out like a sore thumb in the sea of a thousand people. They were ridiculed since they no longer wasted time, or wandered from department to department. While others relaxed for an extra half hour after lunch break, they returned punctually to their workplaces. It is very fortunate that this group stuck to the changed work culture, since that was the foundation for the revolution that swept the Faridabad plant in the months that followed.

The implementation of TQM is progressing at all divisions, although not at the same pace in each of the three aspects. Differences in age, culture, leadership, union relations and other factors make a large impact on the direction and pace of change. To give examples, our Alwar plant has made the most rapid progress in employee involvement and subsequently in Just in Time (III). Improvement has become such an 'infectious disease' there that it literally knows no bounds. It is one of the greenest factories anywhere, having converted all vacant land into lawn or playing field, on which pet ducks and geese roam around. The factory halls have many plants, fountains and waterfalls. Housekeeping is a habit, as is the constant improvement of production processes. In fact the Alwar plant has become a pilgrim spot for many who wish to understand how row can be introduced and what it achieves.

The Faridabad plant has made great progress as well, although it was interrupted by the very difficult and complex task of modernization under very cramped conditions. Since Faridabad is 32 years old, the involvement of employees was a much more complicated process.

What has helped is the basic trust existing between employees and management.

The Parwanoo plant near Chandigarh has had a different course altogether. For two years hardly any progress was made. The main union leader, who is from CITU, the CPM union, decreed TOM to be a hoax and totally against the workers' interests. All attempts at persuasion proved completely infructuous. When nothing else worked, the plant management went about isolating him, since it had been told by many of the workmen that they would be happy to adopt TOM if their union leader would only let them. The process was difficult and lengthy, but has been ultimately successful. Today Parwanoo is working hard at catching up with the rest, and the progress in three or four months has been nothing less than spectacular.

A word about πr. The Just in Time system is generally understood as the supply of material by a vendor to his customer just in time so that the customer does not need to maintain any inventory. In fact this is only one aspect of JIT. Its application inside a plant or in an office is even more important. The principle is that during production, one unit of material is moved from one machine to another or from one assembly station to another alone, or as a batch of one. If there is a stoppage at one point for any reason whatsoever, it will result in the whole line stopping. The purpose is that when there is a stoppage, everyone should collect and understand the reason for the stoppage, and change the process until that fault never recurs. The result is that when problems surface, they are removed permanently. There is no patchwork. and over time the process becomes virtually fault-free. The same principle is applicable, for example, to the handling of vouchers in the accounts department or the processing of orders in sales.

mr was the next important movement to catch on. Whereas the initial projects were undertaken by the process engineers, soon workmen and supervisors were shifting machines, improving material handling and storage on the line and changing processes by themselves. When they felt they needed guidance, they sought it, but otherwise it had the character of a grass roots movement. The classic case was of the machining line that had to be moved from Faridabad to Alwar. The entire layout and process engineering work was done by the Alwar workmen and supervisors who were later to operate the line, with savings of around 50% in space and 30% in manpower. The pride and enthusiasm amongst all employees was tremendous.

Further progress in employee involvement was made through the institution of small group activity (SGA), a vital but often misunderstood ingredient of TOM. Small group activity can succeed only under favourable conditions, of which the most important are: Everyone must be trained in the role of a team member; enough people must be trained as facilitators and as team leaders to enable each team to have a facilitator and a team leader. The progress of each group needs to be monitored carefully to enable the early detection and resolution of any behavioural, structural or competence problems, and its chances of succeeding are very high if the members follow guidelines which have been developed over the years.

Of the four types of small groups. quality circles are the most common. They are voluntary and are formed at the workplace, with members from the same section or department, to solve current problems they themselves face. The second type is the task force, formed by management, to solve a serious and urgent problem. The next is the quality improvement team, which has an interdepartmental character, and is meant to solve chronic problems using a seven step quality improvement story' method. The last type of small group is the cross-functional team, which is formed to manage the development and introduction of new products or major changes in existing ones.

Although small groups are normally formed to solve just one problem, at times they deal with a set of similar problems. Cross-functional teams, and at times some of the

others, have complex structures with sub-groups for each aspect of the problem or project, and changing membership as the work progresses.

Eicher has introduced small group activity in a big way, but has restricted it largely to groups formed by management. The reason is that the voluntary groups, or quality circles, are the most difficult to nurture and make successful. We encouraged such groups to form five years ago, but without proper training and the right environment they were doomed to failure. Literature on quality circles is full of case studies of failed large-scale efforts in the US and in many other countries. Our present effort is to make the process successful through task forces, quality improvement teams and cross-functional teams, and only then to start the quality circle movement. For the time being, the grass roots level is deeply involved in kaizen, or continuous improvement activity on an individual basis, through which the whole organization is being prepared for quality circles.

he present number of small groups working in Eicher are estimated to be between 150 and 200. Many have completed their tasks and have therefore been disbanded. The results so far are exhilarating. Twenty-five year old problems have been solved in a matter of months through systematic analysis, trials and testing, using various methods such as the seven old and seven new QC tools and the QI story approach. Success is improving the willingness to participate in such groups, and is increasing the confidence of everyone in the new system. As chronic problems disappear, attention will shift increasingly to other forms of waste elimination, quality improvement, new product development and increase in flexibility.

Total Quality Control, the third pillar of TOM, has many facets of its own, the important ones of which are: total productive maintenance, under which machine operators take primary responsibility for the health of their machines, and use the maintenance department as a partner whenever needed; systems development and maintenance for every as-

pect of the company's operation, including achieving recognition under 180 9000; making the whole workforce into a highly trained and flexible one; achieving single-source relationship with vendors; eliminating warranty problems altogether and reducing scrap rates to a few per million.

Licher has made significant progress in TQC, but probably not as much as in the other two areas of TQM. There are high targets and achievements in employee training. The aim in most places is that each employee spend 5% of his time in receiving training. Each plant has its own target for approval under 180 9000, and it is most likely that 1993 will see them all achieve it. Vendor relationships have also received considerable attention. When suppliers noticed the changes taking place in our plants, they requested us to include them in the process. From then on, vendor modernization and training has become a major activity at each location. Some vendors have taken to the new system like ducks to water, and have achieved tremendous progress in quality, cost and inventory levels.

As with our suppliers, many of our dealers also showed keen interest in TQM, because of which several training programmes have been conducted for dealers themselves and for their employees. There has been a perceptible improvement in their customer orientation, as also in the efficiency of their operations.

All plants and marketing divisions have made major progress and have achieved a step up the TQM path. There is still, however, a long way to go, especially in achieving Japanese levels of warranty failures and scrap/rework, and in the most critical area of new product development through the use of Quality Function Deployment or the House of Quality. Also, TOM has only just been introduced in several associated units, such as Capol Farm Equipment, Ramon & Demm, TBIL, and in the plants of our alliance company, Enfield India Ltd.

If Eicher has been able to come even this far, it is with the help of certain factors that are worth noting:

- \*A tremendous desire of the whole management team to improve quality;
- \*an experienced and very competent group advisor and facilitator;
- \*a long-standing focus on human resource development;
- \*a professional and sympathetic approach to personnel and industrial relations management;
- \*an unequivocal statement that productivity improvements will not result in any reduction in permanent manpower;
- \*a keenness to improve working conditions and the general work environment, through air-cooling of factories, greening of all open areas, etcetera;
- \*stress on safety and on reduction of fatigue;
  - \*no large plants.

Lotal Quality Management started off as Japan's answer to its own problems, but has now become an international system of management, being applied all over the world. My feeling is that TOM is the only way to make progress towards achieving world standards. Yet it is also a very difficult way because more than a system, it is literally a way of life. a philosophy whose logic must be understood and accepted before it is adopted. Although it is necessary to believe in the philosophy, this is not really difficult because it is based on an understanding of human behaviour, and not on any unexplained dogmas.

It is based on the needs and expectations of normal people, be they customers or workmen, managers or suppliers, on their aspirations and their capabilities, on their hidden capacity and desire to innovate, lead, analyze and do the right thing. The power of people can be compared with that of a laser. Incoherent light from a bulb does very little, whereas a laser can cut through steel because its light is highly aligned and focused. If people are similarly aligned and focused, if they have a common purpose and are trained to achieve it, there is little they cannot do.

## Interview

AN international management consultant based in Tokyo, Partha S. Ghosh has worked closely with the governments and industries of Japan, Thailand, Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia and Korea in the context of their liberalization programmes. What follows is an interview with him by Amit Mitra, Director, Policy Unit of the Business India Group, focusing particularly on Japan's possible interest in India as a major investment area.

AM. India and Japan appear to be moving closer on the economic front. Do you feel that at this juncture, Japan would be interested in investing in India in a major way.

PG. In order to answer this question one would first have to understand the Japanese decision-making process, both at the corporate and government levels. The Japanese in general believe that it is important for them to stay in touch with as many variables as possible in a target country. So they stay in touch with a hundred variables but focus on, say, five. In addition to the hard factors, they also take soft factors seriously such as the attitude of the people, the way they present their cases, the way the government and the bureaucrats talk about how well they have done. They even take seriously what they see on the road when they visit a country.

The Japanese believe in focus and they believe in utilizing human resources where they can get the highest value for unit management hour. And as we know, they have a shortage of managers, of human resources in Japan. This is in part due to the fact that they deploy their managers all over the world. In other words, they will only place their people and make an investment where they feel they will get the highest value for unit management hour. Therefore, my first submission to your question is that the Japanese will now stay with India and watch.

AM. But will they take India seriously enough now to make major investments in the near future?

PG. This only time will tell! However, if we look at Japan's entry patterns into various countries, we can see that the Japanese get involved either when the market is big and they have a lot to learn, as with USA and Europe; or they involve themselves when they see a country starting to become visible in industrial markets. At that point they choose to

enter and ride up with the country concerned. To be honest, I do not feel that India has quite reached that critical mass of visibility in international markets yet.

As a parallel, take the case of China. If you visit China you feel that the infrastructure is working. Nine out of ten people are reading newspapers. People tend to walk on the pavements and not on the street. They cross roads at the proper signal points—something one does not see even in the cities of Delhi, Calcutta or Bombay.

AM. You are saying that the Japanese are conscious of these underlying processes of development though they appear to favour mechanistic analysis.

PG. Absolutely. I think we have not created anything that would encourage Japan to come here and invest. We have spent 42 years since independence experimenting with ideas. But we have not provided any sign of a quantum jump which alone can attract investments. I am suggesting that the Japanese donot yet feel confident enough to invest here in a major way. They still feel the need to take seriously the people who really know India—the British, the Americans who have operated in India. If one looks at the investment patterns of companies that originate from these countries, one will be disappointed. Also, look at how India dealt with a company like Union Carbide. An accident occurred. Obviously, the Chairman of Union Carbide did not plant a bomb on the company premises. But the way India has dealt with Carbide has created doubts in the minds of foreign investors. Therefore, the Japanese wonder whether India is really ready for foreign investment in terms of the soft factors.

Let me raise a third issue which has been my favourite point over the last six or seven years. If we look at Japan's involvement in developing countries, the Japanese have typically responded where they could see a strategic focus. Korea, Taiwan and Malaysia have demonstrated such a focus. Unfortunately, we have merely changed the rules, but we do not know where we are heading. That is not good enough. We have not set clear goals and have not committed ourselves to achieving these goals at all cost. Not a single government or political leader has been able to come up with that kind of a focus-something that I have been trying to promote for the last few years. India will have to be very clear or

the do's and dont's and Japan typically prefers countries which have that kind of clarity and focus.

Recently I carried out a survey with the chief executive officers of a hundred Japanese companies after their visit to India with their Prime Minister, Kiichi Miyazawa. The real feeling among the Japanese was that nothing special had happened in India, though they had heard some good speeches! They went back from India with a large number of questions. I asked specifically in my survey: What will your interest level in India be? Do you see yourself investing in India in the next three to five years? Very few of the executives answered in the affirmative. There was a better possibility of investment in the next seven to ten or 15 years.

About 10 million Japanese travel abroad every year, but only 45,000 of them came to India last year. One can work out India's market share from this. So I think we have to be much more focused now, speeches are just not enough. I feel that we have to stop talking and spend a lot of time and perhaps a couple of million dollars on solid and concrete homework about what our strategy should be. And there, I think, the Japanese would like to see a micro-economic approach because macro-economics is not driving the world any more. When corporations globalize, one country's law no longer determines corporate choices. Corporations sit with surveys of, say, 50 countries and decide on the allocation of resource persons and capital. In this context, India needs to develop a coherent national strategy. I have worked with the governments of Thailand, Turkey, Korea and Japan, and I know what they are looking for. We have not touched even the surface of what they expect.

AM. There has been speculation that the Japanese are ready to build their own townships where they will install their own captive power plants and make sure that the infrastructure works effectively for their personnel. Only then will they proceed to make major industrial investments based on their own support systems. Is there any truth to this?

PG. One has to understand that the Japanese have many investment opportunities throughout the world. Even Margaret Thatcher came to Japan asking for investments only three years ago. American state governors have been visiting Japan for the same purpose. Now compare the infrastructure and quality of the labour force that England, North Carolina, USA or California, or Korea can provide, as against the infrastructure and human resources Indian can provide.

We often talk about the quality of our workforce comprising college-educated Indians. Their Korean counterparts may not able to talk about the philosophies of Einstein and Bernard Shaw, Marx and Keynes, but when it comes to producing a small project report, Koreans can do a much superior and painstaking job. Furthermore, our uneducated workforce has not been able to expose itself to high standards of quality and work ethics. Therefore, I

am sceptical about rumours of Japanese investors flooding India.

AM. Did your survey indicate anything about Japan's interest in investing in different regions of India in the future?

PG. The Japanese are interested in the East Coast. They are not interested in Delhi, Hyderabad or Bangalore, for the simple reason that they are traders. They manufacture through imports worldwide and then they export whatever they have manufactured worldwide. Their plans have to be in that order, and they would prefer to be in that part of this country, where they could plug in with the rest of their network—which is Asia Pacific. In this context, what has India done in the coastal areas between Calcutta and Madras? Nothing! Anything imported into the middle of the country for the purpose of export adds tremendous costs and on top of that, a bad infrastructure can make this process a night-mare.

AM. What can we learn from the way the Japanese industry works in terms of integrating the small and the big in a unique and yet competitive manner?

PG. I personally think that the reason for Germany's success in the 1950s and 1960s, of America's during the early part of the 20th century and the achievements of Japan, Korea and Taiwan through the 1950s and to the 1980s, was their belief that business means building long-term relationships. Based on this premise, you work with your customers, your suppliers, and your consultants as a partner. So holding all the interfaces of partnership, particularly in Japan, irrespective of whether one is a foreigner or a local, the world of business works effectively. To be honest, I feel more wanted in Japan than I feel in India.

This is partly because the Japanese know how to value thinking. They know how to value relationships because relationships are what makes life meaningful. You forge relationships in business, celebrate them, make the best of them: that is how I see the business process taking shape, not only in Japan, but worldwide. Only in the last 10 or 15 years America, for some reason, lost sight of this and that is why I think America's fabric is falling apart. At the end of the day, one is going to build a national fabric and that fabric is built on relationships—the relationship between you and me, between companies—small or big—not on the basis of how one can take advantage of the other. So I feel there is a lot to learn from Japan.

Japan has taught us that the market approach works when every individual loves his country. In India, where every individual at the slightest opportunity, takes advantage of and squeezes his poor mother country, I don't think our market would take us a long way. Therefore, it is essential that India refocus its perspective and build a clear and time bound national strategy. Only then can we seriously interest nations like Japan.

# **Comment**

SACHIO HATA

LESS than a year ago, consequent to the crises triggered by the Persian Gulf war and the tragic death of the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, the world saw India, both politically and economically, as a very unstable country. However, changes that have taken place since then have been fairly dramatic and impressive.

The new industrial policy to encourage foreign investment, announced in July 1991 by the new

government led by Narasimha Rao, is epoch-making for the 'sleeping elephant' who, on principle, had turned away foreign investors since its independence in 1947. A series of policies for economic liberalization and deregulation have been announced and put into practice in a very short period of time, indicating the seriousness of the problems besetting the Indian economy. The collapse of the former Soviet Union further enhanced the speed of India's liberalization and internationalization of its trading.

The second step of this economic revolution was taken on 29 February 1992 by Finance Minister Manmohan Singh in the budget in areas of international trade and foreign exchange. These continued efforts and aggressive measures have clearly signalled to the world India's willingness to encourage foreign investors to consider the possibilities of doing business with India regardless of its negative attitude in the past.

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The Manmohan Singh led delegation to Japan last April was well received. During this visit, the Japanese organized a seminar to encourage local businesses to invest in India. The seminar proved a great success, and the conference room was packed with representatives from large corporations. Despite the current unfavourable economic situation, the response of the audience was a mixture of new expectations for change and continuing doubts which stemmed from past experience in India.

We understand that the Indian government is greatly interested in introducing technical transfer in heavy and high-tech industries. It must be remembered, however, that an economy is like a living creature. You simply cannot transplant just the head or hands and expect them to work efficiently. They will only work satisfactorily when the other parts of the body function together with them as an integrated whole. Therefore, when you plan to develop heavy and high-tech industries, you also need to introduce know-how which support their efficient operation. Consequently, the introduction of know-how in areas such as parts-manufacturing, finance, transportation and distribution should also be positively considered.

India has always been a country in which Japanese investors have shown keen interest because of the enormous size of its market and abundant human resources. The fact that India is the birthplace of the Buddha may also have something to do with its attraction for Japan.

Over the past few years we have been approached by a number of Indian financial institutions to explore the possibility of a partnership. Unfortunately, the outcome was always disappointing. Under the current encouraging environment, however, we have made a fresh effort to study the feasibility of partnership with a prominent Indian financial institution.

When we discuss the possibility of a joint venture with a prospective partner in any country, there are several considerations that we have to keep in mind. First, political stability is essential for economic reform. Even with Narasimha Rao's dedication and efforts, structural changes cannot be carried out without the continuing support of the people of India. In fact, we witnessed cases of failure in the 1980s where policies of economic reform and liberalization were reversed, our investment in research scrapped, and time and money wasted.

Second, it is important that the partners be compatible. Like an international marriage, this is not

easy to achieve. A partnership requires compatibility, matching chemistry, mutual understanding and respect for each other's management philosophy. All these elements assure a long and sustained relationship. Third, one of the keys to success is capable management of the joint venture. The prospective executives have to equip themselves with ample experience and knowledge of the market, and be able to recognize both the good and bad times of a business cycle. They also need to have the intelligence and flexibility to absorb know-how and apply it to the actual market with which they are already familiar.

Fourth, a limited inflation rate and a stable foreign exchange rate are critical for foreign investors, who are afraid of deteriorating currencies which could affect the value of their investment. Until the Indian rupee becomes an international currency and is traded freely in international money markets, this factor will remain especially important. Devaluation, which took place in the hope of boosting India's exports in the past, might discourage foreign investments in the future.

The fifth point is related to the stock market. Evaluation of an investment should be based on a reasonable return on the investment (which is a conservative forecast) and not on the prevailing high stock market price. The sixth consideration is complicated regulations and unclear control by authorities in the subject nation. All these rather unwelcome measures might discourage prospective investors who fear they are wasting time and money and at the same time losing the most opportune moment for investment. The changing attitude of India's government has been looked upon favourably by would-be investors abroad.

Seventh, we also have to think about accounting systems in the subject country. Each country has its own accounting system, befitting its economic structure and meeting its needs. However, overseas investors are unable to evaluate their investment properly unless the accounting system can be translated into an internationally accepted system and understood by qualified accounting firms.

Being a private corporation, our shareholders, creditors and employees expect us to receive reasonable returns on our investments. With efforts from both sides to provide an appropriate environment for safe and sound international investments, I am sure India and Japan can pursue their respective interests and enjoy growth and prosperity.

With our extensive financial experiences in the worldwide network, we would be more than happy to contribute to the further development of India. The world is intertwined much more closely now, what with the rapid development of transportation and communications. Considering its substantial share of the world population, India's stability and prosperity is undoubtedly critical for the peace and well-being of the world as a whole.

## Books

INDIA-JAPAN: Towards a New Era edited by Kamlendra Kanwar. UBS Publishers' Distributors, Delhi, 1992.

IN SEARCH OF SELF IN INDIA AND JAPAN:

Towards a Cross-Cultural Psychology by Alan Ronald. Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1992.

AFTER more than a year of reforms, the big question really is whether the government has anything positive to show for it. Going global sounds fine, but how much foreign investment has trickled in? It is commonplace to contrast India's measly track record in attracting inflows of direct investment with the more favourable picture obtaining in China and other Asian countries.

In this connection, there is no doubt that India is going all out to woo the Japanese. There have been high level contacts between the two countries, symbolized by the recent visit of India's Prime Minister. In turn, the Japanese are responding by sending delegations of industrialists who are eager to check out possibilities of investment in India.

At such a crucial juncture, the publication of this book is extremely timely. Given the lack of historical links, it is but natural that there are very few books indeed that deal, in any depth or detail, with the problems and prospects of Indo-Japanese relations. Now the agenda is radically different as both countries are re-examining their political and economic relationship and coming closer.

The million yen question really is whether the Japanese are likely to invest in India in a big way. It might be premature to pass judgement on current trends, but the subtle hints that every delegation throws out in the form of memoranda, as for exam-

ple by the Rokuro Ishikawa mission in early 1992, suggest that India's reforms need to go much much further for attracting Japanese direct foreign investment.

This also happens to be the perception of Japanese officialdom which is stationed in India. A few contributors which include the book's editor, Kamlendra Kanwar, allude to the perceptive speech delivered by the present Ambassador, Shunji Kobayashi in Bombay last year. The relevant question posed by the ambassador was not the efficacy of India's reforms as such but what comparative advantages does India offer as an investment market?

The focus was therefore on relativities; on whether India provided a more hospitable environment than the competing countries of Asia and ASEAN. The article by ex-Ambassador, Eijiro Noda, makes an essentially similar point although it stresses that the bilateral relationship should also extend to the cultural realm in view of their common spiritual and cultural heritage. In this connection, readers might be interested in the contribution by Toshio Yamanouchi who finds similarities between Japanese kabuki and Indian kathakali, the Japanese choice of soft and soothing colours and the serene old school of paintings and those of the modern Shanti Niketan style.

Coming back to Japanese investment in India, quite a few contributors mention the woeful lack of infrastructure in India as a major barrier. Kalyan Banerji feels that the supply of power, communications and sanitation amounts to 'inadequate encouragement for Japanese business activity'. So too does Raunaq Singh. But does the solution lie in the setting up of model industrial townships? Those who argue that there is an infrastructural barrier to Japanese investment will surely subscribe to this view. This is the essential point that Kalyan Banerji and Raunaq

Singh forcefully make after drawing on the successful examples of industrial parks in Thailand, Malaysia Indonesia and the free trade zones of China.

Besides model townships, Raunaq Singh argues that the lacunae in transport, communications facilities, ports and power also call for large-scale investments. Large sectoral allocations in the eighth five year plan may encourage the Japanese to invest in India in a big way in the coming years. What is left unclear is whether it is the state or the private sector that should contribute to bridging the gap in social infrastructure.

However, there are some who argue that the model township route may not be the best one to attract the Japanese. S.V.B. Raghavan is one them, and he has had considerable experience in dealing with the Japanese when he was finance director and chairman, of BHEL. Instead of setting up model townships, Raghavan argues that we should learn from the Japanese as to how they retained their culture and traditions despite their encounter with Western civilization. 'Thus the kind of Japanese industrial parks being envisaged in India seem to be a totally unwelcome step' in his opinion.

The argument therefore is essentially one of respecting cultural relativism. We should retain our individuality while learning as much as we can regarding Japanese business practices: we should not import their culture. Interesting though it is, this response does not necessarily shed light on why the Japanese investors are not exactly gung ho on India.

The book does not claim to have the answer to this question either as it comprises contributions from a diverse group of personalities ranging from men of business affairs, including a distinguished constitutional lawyer and former ambassador. Given the increasing economic and political proximity of India and Japan, however, the time seems to be ripe for more such books.

ALAN Ronald's effort at a cross-cultural psychological understanding of India and Japan consciously gropes for a better methodological framework to integrate the psychoanalytic with the historical, social and cultural dimensions. The genuine quest for an interdisciplinary approach to the social and behavioural sciences is always bound to yield fruitful results.

However, it is not as if that was the lacuna Alan Ronald was trying to bridge. After all, Erik Erikson's path-breaking contributions to the subject, as for example, on the life cycle, too were deeply informed by social, cultural and psychosocial dimensions of analysis. The problem, however, was that it was too Western-centric to be readily applicable to the study of the Asian psyche. Obviously, such a body of knowledge does not lend itself readily to cross-cultural or psychohistorical interdisciplinary work.

Alan Ronald therefore does actual psychoanalytic therapy with persons in both India and Japan and interrelates the clinical data with the particular culture social patterns and historical development of the society to which the person belongs. This effort is clearly more meaningful in comprehending psychohistory.

The analogy of mending a broken Bennington clay pot is relevant in this context. The author attempts to put together all of the broken fragments together in a way that somehow holds the pot together. However, he admits that, To utilize this method for interconnecting psychoanalytic, sociological, anthropological and historical realities is necessarily to do some violence to each of these disciplines as currently constituted.'

But what are the insights offered by this multidisciplinary approach to cross-cultural psychology? The notion of 'individualized self' is considered the differentia specifica of highly mobile societies such as that of the US. The individual exercises autonomous choice over a wide range of life situations right from childhood or early adulthood onwards.

By contrast, in societies like that of India and Japan, a typical person is not so autonomous as he or she is guided through most major life decisions by mentors or elders. 'Familial self' is thus more predominant in the psyche of the typical Indian or Japanese, which above all, represents a centred-ness around the emotional hierarchical relationships of family. Despite industrialization and urbanization, not much has changed to alter this categorization: social and economic advancement still tends to be subsumed under familial embeddedness.

What will surely interest Indian readers will be the chapters dealing with the profound changes in the structure of the self when there is contact with Western culture, an encounter which has triggered serious identity conflicts. How these have been resolved during the 20th century are also interestingly dealt with. The profile of Ashis is a larger metaphor of the fragmented identities of thousands of upper class Indians who have imbibed Western values in elite educational settings, both in India and abroad, even while coming from traditional familial milieus. Clearly, colonialism has had much to do with this, but the problem continues even to this day. This book therefore deserves a much wider readership than just the practitioners of psychoanalysis.

N. Chandra Mohan

#### Erratum

In the problem on AIDS posed by Saroj Pachauri (Seminar 396, p. 13, para 2), the proportion of HIV infection spread through blood transfusion should read 2% instead of 20%. The error is regretted—Ed.

# Communication

IN 'Uncertainty in Education' (Seminar 395) R. Rajagopalan has rightly questioned the government plan for privatizing education, particularly higher education, in the country. On the face of it, it appears that the government itself is quite certain about its policy.

A close look at the report of the Education Commission (Kothari Commission Report) and the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986), commissioned during the Rajiv Gandhi period when P.V. Narasimha Rao was the Minister for Human Resource Development, shows that a clear-cut policy to privatize higher education was suggested, which included an upward revision of tuition/examination fees. It is useful to examine this aspect more carefully as it would give us an insight into the ideological framework of the government on the issue of education.

Contrary to popular perception, Kothari never advocated privatization of education. In fact, he forcefully argued for the state bearing the near-total (90%) expenditure on education for a long time to come. He suggested a modest 6% GNP towards education expenditure by 1985. But it remains at 3.7% even in 1990. In contrast, the 1986 NPE, while supporting a GNP investment of 6% to meet education expenditure, hinted that this excess money must be raised from the community. Secondly, the 1986 policy forcefully suggested the establishment of fully state-funded institutions like navodaya vidyalayas and autonomous colleges—'seats of excellence'—in many places in the country at the expense of the vast majority of ill-equipped schools

and colleges which in fact needed more state funding.

Curiously, the Acharya Rama Murti Committee appointed by the V.P. Singh government to review the 1986 policy also covertly supported the move towards privatization of higher education. Now yet another review committee under the chairmanship of the current Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Janardhan Reddy, has endorsed the 1986 policy in a recent document. This is understandable given the type of economic policy (which includes education policy) that the Government of India has been following since the early 1980s. For instance, the World Bank document 'Financing Education in Developing Countries' (1986) argues that ...the current financing arrangements result in the misallocation of public spending on education.... There is evidence, deriving from the effect of schooling on earnings and productivity, that in many countries for the average dollar invested, primary education returns twice as much as the one invested in higher education....yet governments in these countries heavily subsidize higher education' (p. 1).

Further, 'offering across the board subsidies to students of all academic and economic backgrounds is inequitable as well as inefficient'. The document offers three broad policy options that could remedy the situation. The package includes: (a) Recovering the public cost of higher education and reallocating government spending on education towards the level with the highest social returns; (b) developing a credit market for education, together with selective

scholarships, especially in higher education; and (c) decentralizing the management of public education and encouraging the expansion of private and community-supported schools.

The World Bank policy document is quite aware that the existing systems, varying between the totally subsidised to the private, will have to be considered against the background of the political, and especially the institutional, aspects of implementation. But the document finds a way out by suggesting covertly that '...the policy package could be phased, with priority given to policy reforms that have the lowest administrative and political costs. The sequence and taking of steps will vary from country to country. In some countries the entire package of proposals is not likely to be fully implemented. For example, full recovery of student loans is unlikely for several reasons: default, dropout, repetition, temporary unemployment and unexpectedly low earnings of graduates.

'But even if recovery were only partial, these policies are a significant improvement over the present situation in which students in higher education contribute little or nothing to the public cost of their education. Moving in the right direction—by beginning to reform the financing of education—is better than continuing the existing situation in most countries. If the efficiency and equity gains from the policy reforms are large enough, governments can find ways to overcome political opposition and implement the package most appropriate to the country's conditions.'

Now it appears that the 1986 education policy is a faithful follow-up of the suggestions made by the World Bank and such other external agencies, especially with regard to higher education. In our view, the whole business of the 'upward revision of fees' is only the 'tip of the iceberg. Enough signals exist indicating a gradual privatization of education. Four months ago, the Andhra Pradesh government had moved a Bill in the State Assembly earmarking 50% of the seats in professional colleges as management quota where capitation fees can be charged legally, thus uprooting the present system of admission based on merit at the entrance test. While moving the Bill, K. Rosaiah, Minister for Health, representing the Chief Minister (who holds the higher education portfolio) said that the provisions of the Bill followed the 'global' and 'national' policy changes. He gave the assurance, however, that 'standards in education' will be maintained 'at any cost'. Such is the commitment of the Congress (I) government towards 'equity' and 'merit'.

#### M. Shatrugna Hyderabad

Note: The Supreme Court has recently dismissed the AP government's bill for capitation fees.

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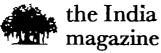
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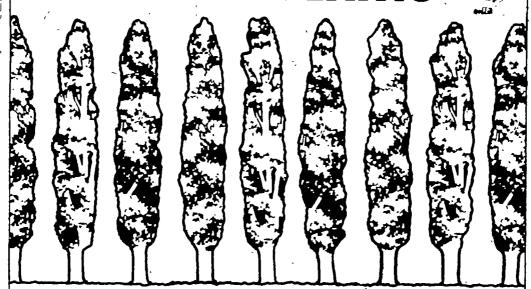
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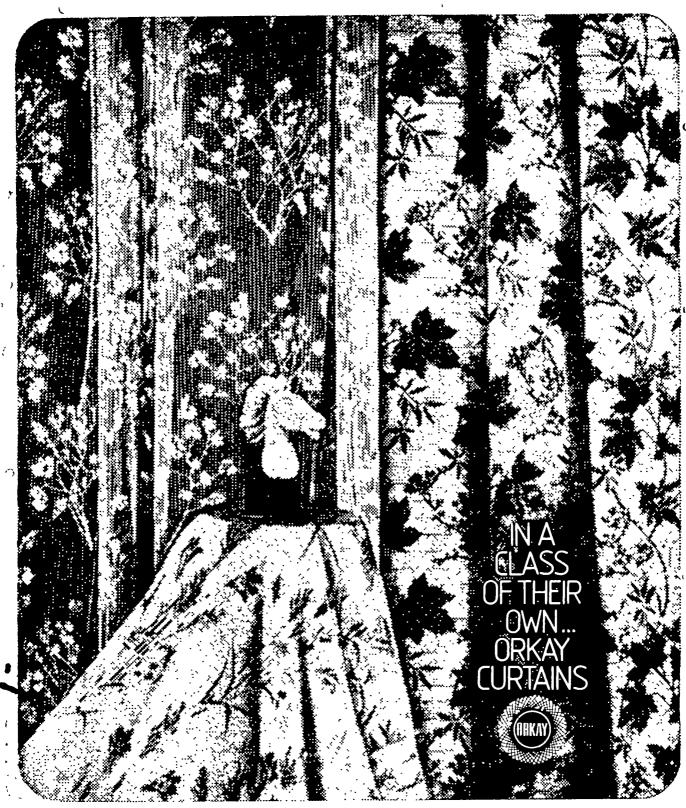
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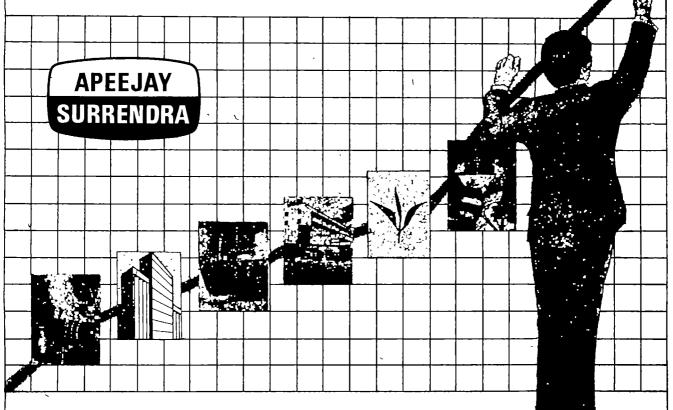
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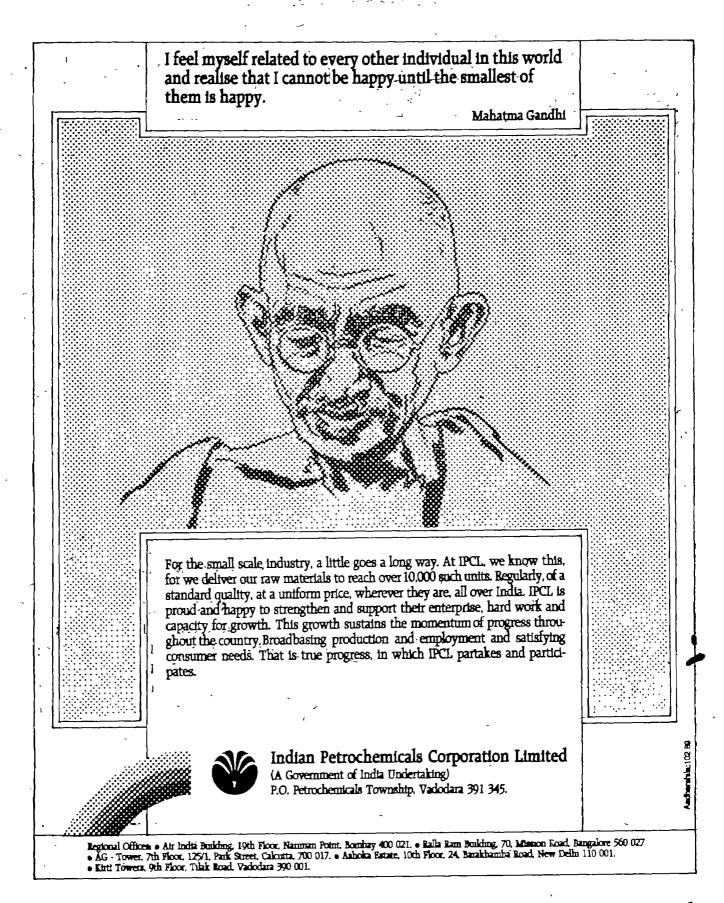


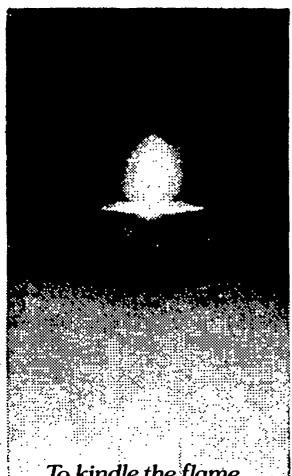


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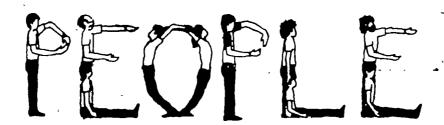
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# The problem

DOES India carry a political party system that can still create and sustain stable elected governments or has the party system fragmented to such an extent that the Westminster model of parliamentary system

can no longer work?

We all know that the ideal party system for this model, in which the winner takes all, is the two party system. However, the model may still work if fragmented political parties in a plural party system can form and maintain stable coalitions both in government and in the opposition. Even in this respect, however, India's record is poor. Two coalitions formed at the centre by non-Congress (I) parties broke up in no time, and the Congress (I) party itself, in the 1990s, seems unable to provide a single party government. One of the issues to be probed is whether we have exhausted all forms of coalitions that can keep the Westminster model running. If we have, we have to go in for a change of our political system.

India is a union of states rather than a federation. The Constitution does have federal space, and the states do enjoy a certain amount of autonomy. But the popular perception of India is one of a centrally governed country. If the centre is weak or unstable, so is the country. If India has entered a plural-polity situation, in which several parties govern the country, one or more at the centre and others in the states, is the centrally-governed image of the state valid? Put in another way, can a stable regime at the centre cope with a plurality of regimes in the states, some of them basically unstable? Where is India ruled and where is it governed?

Will it be incorrect to suggest that the centre may rule, but it cannot govern because the country is governed in the cities, towns and villages where the centre's writ is remote? Also, the centre plays little direct role in the development process except laying down policies and formulating plans. For implementation it has to rely on the states and the self-governing bodies that may be created below the state level.

Are we, then, under compulsion to change the voting system if not the political system? In the Constituent Assembly there was some debate on proportional representation (PR) which had several strong advocates. The idea was given up mainly for two reasons. First, it is too complex for our illiterate mass of voters unlettered in the voting process. Secondly—so it was believed 40 years ago—PR does not produce stable regimes.

Has the scenario changed fundamentally and for sure? Of the 10 elections held so far, only in three was the ruling incarnation of the Congress party routed at the hustings. At the centre, four non-Congress governments have been formed, two mere rump governments destined to a short span of life permitted by the Congress party which midwifed them.

Some people may not regard this as enough empirical evidence that the Congress(I) has lost its future as the single-handed ruler of India. It is therefore necessary to have a close look at the Congress(I) in the post-dynasty period. It seems that even though it wears the dubious dress of a democratic party, it is so factionalized, fragmented and torn asunder by the power ambitions of about 50 leaders that its chances of giving a cohesive lead to the political future of India do not appear bright.

But the other parties are no better. BIP, the second largest party, which governs four Hindi belt states, appears to be a victim of expansion and power. Factions have surfaced. In Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, poor performance of the state governments plus the cheerless condition of the party organization, do not encourage hope that BIP will hold these states at the next poll. In any case, the larger question is: can the BIP get power at the centre on its own? Can it form a coalition with other political parties that will endure?

The Janata Dal has gone through a series of fragmentations and is now regarded by many as a party of the past. Can it stage a comeback with a rejuve-

12

Politics Today

nated social programme and in coalition with the Left Front, whose own power base is confined to a single state, West Bengal, and make its presence felt again in national politics? Is the future of the Left Front ahead of it or behind it?

All this boils down to a single overarching question: does the pluralistic party situation in India encourage the prognosis of a stable coalition at the centre? Who are likely to coalesce with and against whom? Underlying this crucial question is another: has Indian politics learned the art of coalition building? So far in India coalitions have been accidental offsprings of elections. The Janata coalition formed in February 1977 was put together at electoral gunpoint. In 1989, too, the absurd coalition between the Janata Dal, the BP and the Left Front, with the latter two supporting the ID from outside, was also a contrivance born out of clear signals of the defeat of the ruling party.

The Janata Dal, which itself was a coalition of several factions, was created in a hurry only less than a year before the poll. The rival prime ministerial ambitions of the factional leaders were not smoothed over with patient construction work that coalitions need over a fairly long time. Can our political leaders lay the groundwork of coalition well in advance of an election?

Party building itself has fallen by the wayside in India. The Congress (I) claims 50 million members. Its support base is still the largest in the country. It is still the largest coalition of social and economic classes spanning the entire nation. However, there are no masons re-building its house any more. The leaders need the party only to fight the polls and stay in power. The BJP and CPI-M are well organized parties. However, the different constituents of the BJP—RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal—seem to be often in a state of tension, and one does know what resources the leadership invests in party building. Mere politicizing the electorate is not party building. The communists surely try to build their parties on a lar-

ger support base. But they are not making any significant headway.

Political parties are central to organized modern government. They bring the people into the political process. They mediate between power and people. They help the government aggregate the interests of the great diversity of factions, groups, classes and power centres. Paul Kennedy wrote in his famous book on the rise and decline of powers that interest groups 'by definition' sabotage the public good. Still one sees a growing nexus between political parties and interest groups, even in our country.

Finally, the question of leadership. Do leaders create political parties or is it the other way around? Personality is an important determinant of political behaviour, yet political scientists hardly make personality and politics a principal focus of investigation. There is no agreement among political scientists whether individuals are randomly distributed in political roles or whether they are fixed stars on the political horizon.

In our country, dynastic politics throws the random theory into the garbage bag. All over the third world, the tendency is for political personalities to build parties around their own leadership. The party is impotent in the matter of making the leaders accountable to them and through them to the people. Scores of little political dynasties have sprung up in India, and the time has come for us to measure their influence on the party process.

There is no way to build a strong, disciplined party system unless political leaders are committed to a code of ethics. The voters can punish them only once in five years or whatever the periodicity of elections. With India's awesome demography—500 million people actually voting in an election—it seems safe to conclude that after four decades of malpractice, the winner-takes-all Westminster model of voting has become a negation of democracy. It works now more for interest groups and dynastics, big or small, than for society as a whole.

BHABANI SEN GUPTA

13

# Area of darkness

RAJNI KOTHARI

THE history of modern India is a history of the rise and fall of purposive politics. That we today so often talk of politics in a nonpurposive way, not as an activity in which we seek to achieve goals and objectives through the public domain but rather one in which the tribe we call 'politicians' constantly comes in the way of purposive achievement, is a reflection of its fall. In fact, we are increasingly using the term politics in a pejorative sense, as something so profane and lowly as not becoming decent people, as an arena in which only scoundrels, many of them with a criminal record, are to be found. Also, if something goes wrong in any other arena like the economy or the administration or even arts and culture, we blame 'politics' for that.

I believe that it is a serious mistake to blame politics for all our ills. We forget that years ago we had decided as a nation to entrust our destiny to politics and politicians who, rousing the nation from the debris of a defeated civilization, had inspired in us a sense of common purpose that was informed by a set of values and ideals. This was the saga of our struggle for independence, for autonomy, for dignity and self-regard as a people, for selfreliance and liberation from colonial orclutches. It was also the saga, after independence, of our resolve and collective endeavour to put that hard-won independence to the service of our people, in particular the poor and dispossessed, the traditionally discriminated and oppressed among them.

That we made some wrong choices in the strategy of 'development' which we adopted to meet this goal is, of course, clear by now. That we may have taken on too much on our hands may also perhaps be true. But there is no doubt that we undertook to fulfil whatever goals we had in mind by making the political process an agent of social transformation. Even on the more practical level of organizing civic life, coming down from the high plateau of ideals and visions to one of managing the affairs of society, our principal vehicle of doing this was essentially political. We had thought of politics as an arena in which private individuals were together concerned about things and happenings in the public sphere. Those whom we entrusted with authoritative roles and positions in the public sphere were to be there by virtue of representing the people at large.

On 'representation', too, our perspective was in many ways different from the one that had prevailed in the West. For us, representation in politics meant a mode of integration of a highly diverse and in many ways disparate society and complex civilization. The political process was conceived as one of pooling together diverse citizens' opinions and perceptions, groups and cultures, into one whole civic identity.

It is for this reason that we had adopted a view of citizenship that was not limited, as it was under the colonial regime, to a few privileged strata. Our whole notion of citizenship entailed an extension of the public sphere to those who had been earlier and in some other societies at a similar stage of development excluded—the working class, women, the rural folk and, above all, the poor.

It is with such an idea of citizenship that we had approached the doctrine of popular sovereignty as an inherent feature of our Constitution which begins with the words 'We, the People'. It is also from such a simultaneously pluralist and inclusive conception of political citizenship that we had embarked upon a federal, decentralized, participatory and multi-centred model of democracy. To this end we adopted an institutional model of the state that was not just representative in the sense of having a parliamentary and cabinet form of governance but also one in which a vibrant party system was to play a central and critical role.

L o achieve any or all these dimensions of 'nation-building', we had put our faith in the activity known as politics. And to carry it all out we had put our faith in the vocation of politicians.; Both the integration of a diverse and-notentially divisive society and the achievement of social justice, equity through the development process and a framework of governance and administration in which the people were to be involved, were tasks to be carried out through politics, as was the inclusion of more and more social strata, submerged and left out for long from civil society.

Politics was to be the medium par excellence of social transformation in which more and more people were to be involved. These people were to be not just passive spectators or those whose mere consent was sought every few years, but dynamic actors in the arena called politics, individually, collectively (as groups and communities and regions) and, of course, nationally. For all this to happen one thing was essential: the availability of and

intense commitment to the democratic process by a set of inspired practitioners of the art and enterprise called politics.

It is with this art and enterprise of politics that I am concerned in this article. I am not concerned with issues like the social base of politics, its economic context or the psychocultural milieu in which it has to operate. These are important problems, particularly in view of the current pathology of Indian politics; in many ways they are more important than the limited concern of mine in this article, i.e. with the functioning of the domain of politics. With what can be called the art of politics, the practitioners of this art and the minimum institutional frame within which this art was supposed to be practised with a view to implementing the aims and objectives they had been entrusted with—and the way it is now being practised.

Logically, the next and obvious question to ask is, where do we find ourselves today? I have already hinted at the current image of politics and politicians at the beginning of this article. But let me put it more sharply even at the risk of some slight exaggeration. Far from enabling the public arena and the political process to become the key catalyst of social transformation and create a sense of common striving among all, we have entered an age of creeping depoliticization, growing amorality, and the collapse of ideology and vision. There has been a gradual handing over of the public arena to 'brokers', 'fixers', 'wheelerdealers', 'money-bags' and, now increasingly, racketeers and out and out criminals.

But what is interesting to note here is not the sudden decline in the quality and tenor of the public arena. Rather, it is the sudden swing into power of various professionals outside that arena. These people are out to wreck the public sphere as we know it and replace it with all kinds of private interests. Hence the fact that not only has a Gandhi and a Nehru given place to another Gandhi (Rajiv) and another Nehru (Narasimha Rao) but that these latter have themselves been

reduced to being brokers of other interests and the real players in the arena (increasingly privatized) are a totally different set of individuals.

These individuals are all upstarts, who bend the law and the office they hold to their personal advantage. Considering themselves to be saviours of the nation, they possess swollen egos and a nauseating arrogance which is sometimes wrapped in sweet and suave modesty and a highly deceptive public profile. All of them enjoy greater power and autonomy than any regular politician ever has, though each owes his status and ascendancy to a new breed of politicians, from Sanjay Gandhi to Manmohan Singh, the latter's meteoric rise to the top in politics (as the former's) truly representing the demise of representative government and the rise of pseudo politicians.

Actually, the process had begun much earlier, though the cabals of power which prevailed then were less upstartish and blatant then the current power brokers who have virtually marginalized elected leaders. Soon after Rajiv Gandhi made his debut into politics, we had the so-called 'computer boys', who were quickly elevated to occupy important positions after he became Prime Minister. These were the Arun Nehrus, the Arun Singhs, the Rajesh Pilots, the Sam Pitrodas and a whole battery of technocrats. None of them (with one possible exception) was selfishly inclined; some of them, like Pitroda, genuinely meant to push the country into new vistas. But nonetheless, the process they represented ended up undermining democratic politics.

Still earlier, again after the powerful thrust represented by Indira Gandhi's rise to absolute power, there came into being the 'kitchen cabinet' on the one hand and the highly powerful Prime Minister's Secretariat on the other. Both included at once restless and committed people, some of whom strongly believed in strengthening the democratic process and giving it new social content. Yet, in the final analysis, they ended up short-circuiting the regular democratic and constitutional apparatus.

Nobody would accuse P.N. Haksar or Romesh Thapar or even Dinesh Singh or I.K. Gujral of wanting to do this. However, some of them may have been unwitting accomplices of Indira Gandhi, whose deeper designs they discovered, to their horror, just a short while before Emergency was clamped on the country. The real tragedy of these people was not that they became willing or unwilling instruments in the implementation of Indira Gandhi's designs but that once the regular constitutional process was weakened, they lost control and the governing process lent itself to scandalous uses by the Sanjay Gandhi brigade, the Antulays, the Chiman Patels and the V.C. Shuklas, none of whom had any scruples about violating either the Constitution or the democratic political process.

here are, of course, undoubted exceptions—a Madhu Dandavate, an Inderjit Gupta who has recently been honoured as being the best parliamentarian, a M.A. Baby who helped mobilize 250 signatures of MPs against the Dunkel draft, the great old N.G. Ranga, and Ram Nivas Mirdha who has shown great objectivity and courage as Chairman of the JPC (which I call the alternate parliament in the making). There are also some truly vocal representatives of popular and grassroots forces—a George Fernandes, a Somnath Chatterji, a Jaswant Singh. One would wish that L.K. Advani and Atal Behari Vajpayee could be added to the list. They are both eminent and honest parliamentarians. But for some reason they decided to 'Hinduize' themselves and have become lost to politics as I have defined the term in this article. I feel particularly let down by A.B. Vaipavee.

Once the derailment of politics as a public domain managed by true representatives of the people was complete—a process which has been going on for almost 20 years—various other kinds of forces and personalities began to ride on the new crest and call the shots. These range from businessmen to academics and bureaucrats or bureaucrats-turned-politicians and even police officers. In the name of national unity and

security, or in the name of economic prosperity and technological advancement, these people have virtually mortgaged the country to bankers of all kinds, ranging from the World Bank to other commercial foreign banks represented in India and, on the defence front, the US Army and Navy, the Pentagon and the State Department with their new blueprint of global dominance through both cash and guns. Even if one were to counter them through some mix of diplomacy and strategic alignments, as far as the democratic process at home is concerned, we seem to have entered a period of deep recession from which easy recovery does not seem to be in sight.

The malaise that afflicts the political process is, of course, deeper than just the emergence of a new set of power grabbers. In some ways the latter are only a symptom of the real malaise. This lies in the virtual collapse of institutions, in particular the Parliament (and state legislatures) and the party system but also the judiciary, the civil service and even the press (the so-called 'fourth estate'). The model with which we started was one of entrusting to these institutions the entire task of social transformation. the chief instrument of which was to be a system of representation. This system could both bridge the gap between government and the people and, through a series of institutional devices such as federalism and decentralization and through the full play of the party system, enable the people themselves to be the real authors of change.

he system of representation on which the whole model rested was one in which the politicians were to represent the country in an organic and holistic manner each one of them and all of them together. At the same time, in operational terms, each of them was to represent specific constituencies consisting of an identifiable set of individuals, groups, communities and territories. The basic collapse of politics as it was conceived during the heyday of the national movement and the years that followed consists in the very decline of this representative system. Whatever 'politicians' we still have have not only ceased to represent the nation as a whole, but also in the more narrow and mechanical meaning of representation, i.e. of representing various constituencies and the people belonging to them.

Today, out of 521 members of the Lok Sabha, barely 50 can claim to have a 'secure' position vis-a-vis their constituencies. The rest have to depend either on some 'wave' or, in an increasing number of cases, money and muscle power. To ensure success, a large number of them use rigging in one form or another: some even stoop to using rabid communal or religious fanaticism to achieve their ends, in many instances with the help of criminal and mafia gangs. The very electoral process on which the representative system rests has thus lost credibility over time. It is ceasing to be an instrument of the will of the people, or even the will of political parties on whom the outcome of elections is supposed to rest but which are fast losing their grip over the political process.

It is the party system that provided the true dynamic of the model of politics that we had opted for. This too, is in a shambles. The 'Congress system' on which I had built my earlier theoretical model of democracy in India has come a cropper. Not only has it ceased to be a representative institutional structure in any meaningful way; it has even ceased to be a power machine in the sense in which it had become after the initial idealism of nationbuilding and social transformation had receded. Nor is it even a convenient instrument of power-hungry individuals. For the fact is that real power has passed out of the hands of Congress politicians.

As regards the other parties, there have been one or two efforts at moving away from the at once centralized and anaemic culture of politics represented by the Congress and to adopt policies that would move the government closer to the people through decentralization, employment generation, rural development, small industries, a package of social policies aimed at the deprived, environmental regeneration and the like, as well as restore to the people their

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basic rights as was done in 1977 and attempted again in 1989. But, lacking a real party through which all this could be enhanced, both efforts crumbled like a pack of cards. Some very good intentions got reduced to handing things over to technocrats on the one hand and lumpens on the other.

Today, there is no point running away from the fact that these socalled opposition parties are also as available to forces of criminalization, corruption and communalism, as well as a complete lack of understanding of the role of politics in a highly diverse and continental size society like ours, as was the Congress. Even today the Janata Dal and its orphan, the srp, have been unable to throw out from their party criminals and gangsters who are known to operate from within them. And neither of them, when in power, was able to hold their bureaucrats at bay.

Any society whose leadership (both governing and oppositional) decides to bypass basic institutions in the pursuit of power, whatever the reasons for which this is done, ends up destroying the finer checks and balances without which governance gets reduced to personal equations and arbitrary power plays and ultimately, to extra-constitutional coteries, lumpenization and uninhibited corruption.

Perhaps we may soon be bringing to an end our affair with representative democracy, and thus with politics as we once understood that term. We are in any case fast moving into an era of depoliticization in which even those who call themselves politicians are either themselves depoliticized or have become instruments in the hands of those who have no faith in open politics, and none whatsoever in either democracy or the people. But as we move down the precipice these very people will demand that the political process is restored, together with their status and position in it. What kind of politics, what model of it-whether representative or more socially repressive through embracing some model of a theocratic state, we do not know. What we do know is that we face a highly uncertain future. The battle lines will soon be drawn.

# Seeds of fascism

MANINI CHATTERJEE

THE Bharatiya Janata Party prides itself as being the only non-left ideological party in India. It has come to be regarded by large sections of Indian (and international) public opinion as the Indian right, the only political formation which offers a right wing alternative to the country's present socio-economiccultural system, an alternative which also contains seeds of fascism, given the party's 'majoritarianism' or the championing of Hindu supremacy. In recent years, the party has acquired a high profile and gained the position of the single largest opposition party in both houses of Parliament and governments in four key north Indian states. But even a brief study of the positions taken by the BJP since its formation in 1980 belies the widespread belief that it is a party with a firm ideology which can offer an alternative to the present system.

Far from being a party with strong ideological moorings, in its short 12-year-old history, the BJP has continuously vacillated on economic issues and has been unable to work

out a clear path for itself. It has had two distinct phases so far: the first six years under the leadership of Atal Behari Vajpayee who tried to fashion the BJP into a moralistic force inspired by Gandhism; and the second phase ushered in by L.K. Advani who successfully played the 'Hindu card' which yielded remarkable electoral success. However, neither phase whether under the liberal statesmanship of Vajpayee or the hawkish Hindutva of Advanimanaged to give the BJP a lasting ideology or vision that can justify its label of being an 'alternative'.

Under both Vajpaye and Advani, the BJP, has reacted to changing Indian reality and has not been a party of change. On the contrary, it is a strongly status quoist party which has cloaked its real orientation under the rhetoric of Hindutva. An analysis of the positions taken by the BJP shows that it has never challenged the prevailing power structure of the system and if it turns increasingly 'Hindu' it is only to preserve the existing structure and the privileges of the upper caste minority', protecting upper and middle class Hindus against the onslaughts they may face in the coming future.

he ideological confusion of the BJP allows' several different strands to coexist, the most dominant of which is the fascist method of spreading a false consciousness of 'Hindu identity' being in danger because of the Indian political establishment's alleged pampering of minorities. L.K. Advani was instrumental in creating this consciousness and since it has met with success, the 'Hindu card' is seen to be intrinsically BJP. But a study of the BJP's national executive and national council resolutions indicate that this has not always been so and that the Hindu card is a reaction to circumstance, prompted not just by the nature of the 1984 general election verdict but also by the BJP's failure to make headway on any other issue.

In an interview on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the BJP, Advani exulted over its spectacular performance in the elections and claimed that it was due to the party's ability 'to project a distinct political personality of its own, and ... sustained organizational activity at the grassroots'. Elaborating, he said: 'The distinct features of the BIP's personality are: our stand on Article 370, our demand that the Minorities Commission be replaced by a Human Rights Commission, that the Directive Principle of State Policy in respect of uniform civil code be implemented and that a Rama Mandir be constructed at Ayodhya at the site believed to be the birthplace of Shri Rama.'

Ironically, not one of these issues figured in any of the many speeches made by Atal Behari Vajpayee in the first few years of the BJP. Nor were the issues at all emphasized in the resolutions adopted by the party till-almost the end of the 1980s. In fact, the BJP took pains to distance itself from its Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) past not least because the BIS was characterized by the narrow. parochial outlook captured in the slogan 'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan'. The BJP tried to project itself as an all-India party, with a set of clean and mature leaders (in contrast to the squabbling set that ruled the Janata Party, Lok Dal et al) which would concentrate on 'grassroots activity' to build a political base in order to challenge the Congress(I). Its saffron hue was non-existent or at least well disguised.

In his presidential address at the first national convention of the BJP held at Bombay in the last week of December 1980, Vajpayee said India was facing a 'moral crisis' which could be overcome by the restoration of moral values to their due place in public life and felt that the main challenge facing India was the twin threat of authoritarianism and anarchy. The three day convention ended with Vajpayee's call to the party to follow a three pronged programme of 'Sangathan, Sangharsh and Sanrachna' (organization, struggle and constructive work) in order to spread the message of 'Gandhian socialism' throughout the country. The convention also discussed the need to emphasize 'antodaya programmes' in the villages, another Gandhian concept according to which the 'poorest of the poor' should be the beneficiary of any development programme. It is ironic that every time the party runs out of a plank, it harks back to 'anto-daya', as it did at its recent Gandhinagar national meeting in May this year when there was an apparent lull in Ayodhya.

To Vajpayee's credit, the BJP did try to tread the slow, painstaking path of building a new organization with a new outlook, away from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the BJS legacy. To an extent this was expediency. Despite fervent efforts to be an all-India, supremely nationalistic 'Hindu' party, the Jana Sangh made little inroad into the Indian polity. This was partly a result of its flawed ideology. The only ideologue the Hindutva forces ever had was Veer Savarkar who decreed that India was a Hindu nation and that all those subscribing to religions born of this soil (which includes Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, tribals and outcastes) were Hindus. According to him, Hindus had an organic link with Mother India and were thus the most patriotic community in the country. The outsiders' (Muslims and Christians) were enemies, and India would achieve greatness and glory only if Hindus regained supremacy, subjugating if not eliminating the minorities.

A hough the RSS, which was founded by K.S. Hedgewar in 1925, differed with Savarkar's Hindu Mahasabha, the organization's outlook was essentially determined by the Savarkar thesis. With Independence and the bloody partition of the country, the Hindutva forces (those seeking political power for the Hindus as a collective entity) ought to have gained strength, particularly in view of Pakistan declaring itself an Islamic nation. The Jana Sangh, however, remained a fringe phenomenon, holding pockets of influence among refugees from Pakistan and building a base of sorts among the petty traders and shopkeepers of urban north India but never really posing a challenge to the Nehruvian

The basic problem arose from the fact that despite the theories propounded by Savarkar and his ilk, there was no monolithic Hindu com-

munity. Caste and class played a much greater role precisely because they were rooted in the Indian reality whereas pan Hindu consciousness was not. The power seeking 'Hindus' who were called upon to battle the alien Muslims were essentially the upper caste Hindu elite but this elite did not respond to the BJS call because it did not feel threatened by the impoverished Muslims who had stayed behind after 1947. This elite, which became the backbone of the Nehruvian nation-building exercise, had little time for the jingoism of the Jana Sangh. Stuck with its urban 'bania' image, the latter could make little inroad into the vastness of rural India and therefore had to rest content with playing 'opposition politics', doing well as part of the combined opposition till it finally merged into the Janata Party in 1977. When the Janata Party broke on the issue, among others, of dual membership, the erstwhile Jana Sanghis were forced to form their own party.

Having learnt the lesson from the Jana Sangh experiment, Vajpayee decided to make the party as broadbased as possible, outlining special programmes for farmers, tribals and scheduled castes in the first four years of his presidentship. The belief then was that the only way to challenge the Congress (I) hegemony was to become a clone—that is, become another umbrella party promising all things to all people without unduly disturbing the status quo.

hough resolution after resolution was bitter about the Congress (I) rule, the attack was never ideological. Issues like Article 370, Minorities Commission and the Uniform Civil Code do not figure in this period at all. That 'minorityism' was not an important issue can be guaged from a passing statement made by Vajpayee in his presidential address at the party's national council session at Cochin in April 1981. Talking about the social discrimination and exploitation of women in India, he spoke of the need to set up a national commission for women. His exact words were: 'There is need to create a constitutional commission on the lines of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Commission and the Minorities Commission.'

Clearly, the demand for scrapping the Minorities Commission, which Advani himself sees as one of the few 'distinctive' features of the BJP was not on the agenda of the party until recently. Up to the election results of 1984, when the BJP was reduced to just two seats in Parliament, the party continued on the same 'Gandhian socialist' path, without any distinct support base or programme, harping on grassroots activity among the poor and downtrodden (without radicalizing them in any way but more in the paternalistic, World Bank-inspired non-governmental organization framework). This, however, showed little visible results in terms of accretion of support to the party's base. The various national executive and national council meetings took place at regular intervals, at different corners of India, giving the party the image of being well organized, but the resolutions adopted were more in the nature of pious declarations than the hallmarks of a party offering a genuine alternative.

At the national council session in Simla in June 1981, the three resolutions taken up were on the welfare of ex-servicemen, against the rigging in the Garhwal byelection and on the low procurement price for paddy that year. Similarly, in the general secretary's report for 1981-82, presented at the BJP's national council session in New Delhi in April 1983, the then general secretary, L.K. Advani reported that the main agitational activities undertaken in that period were a countrywide anti-price rise stir, a continuing crusade against corruption, a firm stand against atrocities on harijans and morchas in favour of farmers' rights. At the national council session at Indore in January 1984, the party adopted a statement on the economic situation which is replete with rhetoric against the inequitous land relations in the countryside and attacks the planning process and the fiscal and monetary policies. But even here it does not advocate any sweeping reforms or right wing liberalization which Rajiv Gandhi was to hesitantly usher in a couple of years later.

It is clear from these and other party documents of that period that

the BJP had failed to evolve as an ideological alternative, either in the realm of economics or in the field of a socio-cultural 'Hinduward' shift that was to characterize its politics in the late 1980s. Its criticism of the Congress(I) was confined against the ruling party's increasing corruption and authoritarianism and was in no way an ideological offensive challenging the system per se.

Lt is commonly believed that L.K. Advani changed the course of the BJP when he took over as president in 1986, charting a clear and unambiguous path in favour of Hindu resurgence and an all out attack against 'pseudo secularism' and minorityism'. But the turning point was brought about less by Advani's vision and more by force of circumstance, specifically the mauling the BJP received at the hustings in 1984. It was not just the ignominous election result but the reasons why they lost which set the BJP leadership thinking. While the BJP was trying to shed its Jana Sangh past, the Congress(I) under Indira Gandhi had successfully nurtured a saffrontinged constituency which first came into evidence in the Jammu elections in 1983. The BJP lost its 'natural constituency' both in the Jammu and the Delhi elections that year, but it got a drubbing in the 1984 general elections when the Congress(I) led by Rajiv Gandhi won an unprecedented mandate by raising the spectre of national disintegration at the hands of minority secessionism.

While officially, opposition parties dismissed the 1984 verdict as abnormal, and attributed it to the 'sympathy wave' that swept the nation with Indira Gandhi's assassination, the BJP was astute enough to realize that the verdict was much more than a mere sympathy wave. It brought home to them that the clusive 'Hindu vote' which they had been chasing since Independence and given up as lost, was actually in the making, but instead of it being acquired by a Hindu party, it was once again being usurped by the Congress. The 'Hindu vote' did not, of course, encompass the entire Hindu community but it was large enough for a party to make a living

off it. The only difficulty was that the Congress(I) had garnered that vote not on a pro-Hindu or an anti-Muslim card but on a carefully orchestrated anti-Sikh platform. For the BJP, and more particuarly the RSS, Sikhs had always been part of the Hindu brotherhood and they could not make themselves whip up anti-Sikh hysteria which they were so adept at doing vis a vis the Muslims.

The BJP-RSS leadership, perhaps intuitively, realized that the Hindu vote so to speak was not just a result of minority fundamentalism but was related to the fact that the Hindu elite, which had been so secure and upfront in the first few decades after Independence, was beginning to feel threatened. The grand Nehruvian secular-socialist dream was beginning to crack, new aspirants from hitherto subjugated regional and ethnic groups were coming to the fore, and the Hindu upper classes could not remain quite so reassured of their natural supremacy in a hitherto static society which was rapidly turning dynamic.

I he difficulty before the RSS and the Jana Sangh had been that the Hindus had no desire to avenge the 'wrongs' of history—attack the Muslims and Christians—in free India because the future was theirs. Now that the future was not quite so rosy, their attention could at last be focused on the injustices of history, towards scapegoats to justify the frustrations of present-day semimodern existence. It was necessary then, to identify the enemy and it was a stroke of sheer luck that both the upturning of the Supreme Court verdict on the Shahbano case and the opening of the disputed Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhoomi structure took place almost simultaneously in 1986. The Muslim minority and the political parties which had sought to protect them became the new enemies.

The fact that Muslim fundamentalism had indeed grown and been nurtured by even well meaning secularists came in handy as propaganda tools for the BIP which was trying to regain the old Jana Sangh constituency and adding many more numbers to that support base. The

five years of Rajiv rule, characterized by the rise of a new middle class in urban and semi-urban India coupled with a complete inability to tackle the systemic crisis facing the country, made it easier for the BP to attract the middle class vote.

L he Ramjanmabhoomi issue had two facets to it-one, it invoked the image of Hindu subjugation in medieval India and was a potent image of revenge particularly for the upwardly mobile yet frustrated youth of the mofussil middle class. Two, it was also a powerful religious symbol attracting the support of religious minded people who had otherwise no wish to quarrel with the Muslims. By systematically working on the Ramjanmabhoomi campaign, the BJP-RSS-VHP managed to widen their base far beyond the boundaries ever achieved by the Jana Sangh. Other 'positive' features of the BIP, such as its disciplined organization, mature leaders and skilful media management, played only an incremental role-like packaging to a saleable product. After all, under Vajpayee the BIP did undertake several 'grassroots' activities but the party could only strike a chord when these activities revolved around 'Ram shila pujans' rathyatras rather than farmers' rights or tribal problems.

From 1986 onwards, the BJP has off and on spoken of its earlier themes of 'antodaya', 'swadeshi' and 'integral humanism'. But in essence, it has remained a single issue party. The one issue that has kept it going is the simmering conflict in Ayodhya and the other issues that it might (infiltration, up seriously take Kashmir, statutory status to the Minorities Commission) are all part of the package deal to keep the antiminorities sentiments alive. With the advent of market reforms in India in the last year, the BIP's ideological confusion has become even more acute because it has been unable to spell out its economic vision. Its most recent effort in this directionan economic policy statement entitled 'Humanistic Approach to Economic Development: a Swadeshi Alternative'—was a pathetic attempt to reconcile two opposing views within the party-one inspired by RSS purists who are against globalization

of the Indian market and the other by a new breed of pragmatists who are for the new economic policy. The BIP thus remains confused if not bankrupt when it comes to an economic vision which must remain the basis for any ideological alternative.

In another crucial area, that of the performance of its state governments, the BJP's record has been unspectacular and uninspiring. The most damaging charge made against its state governments is not that they are incompetent but that they have proved to be no different from the previous Congress regimes. Barring the Ayodhya issue in Uttar Pradesh and efforts to change the history syllabi in the schools of Madhya Pradesh, the performance of the governments has been lacklustre. For the average citizen in, say, Tikamgarh district, the officialdom and its policies have marked little real change. This is in sharp contrast to the left governments who may be reviled by powerful sections but are seen and felt to be different from the Congress. Even the Laloo Prasad government in Bihar, for good or bad, is perceived to be radically different from its Congress predecessors.

In this lies the crux of the BJP's problem in being\_an ideological alternative. In a nation marked by wide disparities, based on caste, class and regional inequalities, the BJP has no answers on how to reconcile the differences between antagonistic forces. In his first presidential address at the party's plenary session in New Delhi in May 1986, L.K. Advani had characterized the BJP as a 'nation first' party. He had said: 'If anyone were to ask me which is the most distinctive trait of BJP's personality, I would say that BJP is the voice of unalloyed nationalism. Ours is a 'Nation-First' party. It aspires to be the heartbeat of India.'

But what does this nation comprise of? Who belong to this nation? If patriotism is to be nurtured through Hindutva, Hindu resurgence towards what? The BJP appears to be bereft of basic answers because it has not bothered to undertake any rigorous analysis of what ails the vast majority of the people and of

how to solve the chronic problems of injustice, inequality and the latent conflict between classes, castes and regions. It has chosen the easy way out of playing on the fears of the existing elites and neo-elites and marking out the Muslims as the enemy. The BJP has not mounted a campaign against the massive brain drain caused by the emigration of well-to-do Hindu Indians but has instead focused exclusively on the alienness of the minorities.

learly, then, with no real alternative to offer, the BJP remains essentially a 'reactionary' party, an organization which will resist change if it threatens the basic unequal structure of India as it stands today. In that sense, it is right wing, but not consciously so. No party in India can afford to be disdainful towards the have nots and therefore the BJP also indulges in populist rhetoric. Though the confusion in the party continues, the rapid changes in Indian society and polity will determine the party's future course. The BIP appears to have three options right now. It can continue to be totally guided by the RSS combine's (the strident Hindutva ficiaries would be the upper caste Hindus but would carry in its fold middle and lower castes as well) with pro-poor populism. This, in a sense, is a recipe for fascism and is inspired by the same combination of nationalism and socialism that propelled Hitler to power. But to become wholly fascist with a limited upper caste Hindu base, the BJP would need state power for a considerable length of time to consolidate its position. For the present, this appears unlikely but the party could tread on this path if the frustrations of the middle class continues to grow.

The second option is to discard the populist rhetoric altogether and become an out and out right wing party, combining a strong dose of jingoism with all-out support for the globalization and liberalization of the Indian economy. It would have to take a position right of Manmohan Singh in the economic arena, and shed its swadeshism for an unabashed pro-US, pro-IMF/World Bank stance and seek to give India its own version of Thatcherism and Reagan-

ism. The third option, which seems to be closest to its heart, is to fashion itself as a 'right of centre' party, operating within the broad consensual framework but tilted towards the right. Advani has frequently stated that the Congress before Independence, and even for a few years after, had the makings of a right of centre party, not so much in economic matters but in socio-cultural positions: which means that it recognized Hinduism to be the substratum of Indian unity.

Advani has often stated that a Congress headed by Sardar Pate rather than Nehru would have been much closer to Indian reality. With the end of the Nehru dynasty, the effort of at least one section of the RSS/BJP is to ally with and eventually coopt a large chunk of the non-Nehruvian Congress, if such a portion exists. The RSS leadership saw a nascent Patel in Narasimha Rao and have not given up their hopes in him altogether. But whether or not Rao agrees to do business with them, the BJP/RSS will continue to piggyback on a section of the Congress to achieve a right of centre alternative.

Dut all three options are status quoist because they are primarily aimed at protecting a narrow constituency of the privileged against the onslaughts by the majority of the people who have so far been denied access to a share in the cake. The BJP's options thus will also be governed by the threat perceptions of this class. To divert attention from the real nature of the Indian crisis, the BJP has used communalism and antiminorityism as a tool. But even if it were to win in Ayodhya, the problems facing the country would not be solved. If the privileged sections of India feel acutely threatened, then the BJP might turn increasingly fascist. But if the threat perception is less acute, a right of centre or right wing alternative appears more likely. Ironically though, the BJP leadership, despite its claims to ideological clarity, does not know which way it is going. Only the forces of change and the degree and direction of this change will determine what course of (re)action the BJP and its allies will eventually adopt.

# Out of touch

AMULYA GANGULI

TWO recent articles in The Statesman by Sitaram Yechuri and Hiren Mukerjee confirmed the old adage that no one is so blind as he that will not see. Only towards the end of their strident defence of the regime that collapsed in the Soviet Union did the two stalwarts reluctantly concede that there may have been failures of some kind in their paradise lost. Otherwise, their entire effort was to paint the land of their dreams in the rosiest terms, as if to suggest that the recent developments were an aberration which history would somehow set right.

What is noteworthy about these paeans of praise were that they came both from the CPI(M) and the CPI. underlining a unity that does not otherwise exist. Of the two, the latter was expected to have a better understanding of the changing face of the Soviet Union. It had, after all, gone along with Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin, unlike the cPI(M) which still looks upon the Soviet director as the epitome of all virtues. The CPI had shown some appreciation of Gorbachev as well. But going by what Mukerjee has written, it seems that the party is

back to where it was before the Sino-Soviet split made it a little more susceptible to ideas questioning the monolithic communist creed.

The regression is all the more unfortunate because the Indian political system's need for the communists was never greater than at the present moment. The reason is patent enough. For the first time ever, an organized force of fascism is on the prowl. The country did have a brief taste of this brand of politics when Sanjay Gandhi ruled the roost. But that was the handi-work of one-and-a-half rulers, as Jagjivan Ram pointed out after his defection from Indira Gandhi's camp. The threat could have assumed horrendous proportions if Indira Gandhi did not make the monumental mistake of calling for elections in 1977 in the belief that the country was eager to consolidate the gains of the Emergency.

But a lesson, however brief, has still to be drawn from that experiment with untruth, for the country seemed to have forgotten overnight all the values of democracy and adherence to truth which were supposed to have inspired our freedom struggle. Instead, it succumbed without a whimper to the dark forces of repression. It was pathetic in those days to see how men prominent in the academic world kowtowed before the enfant terrible. In a way, however, this was a sign of things to come, for the BP's fascist ideas have also gained a kind of respectability nowadays which would have been unthinkable only three or four years ago, and people in polite society no longer feel squeamish about flaunting their communal bias.

his is a time, therefore, when the communists could have finally made some contribution to the wellbeing of their motherland by articulating ideas which have a tinge of modernity about them and which can show up the medievalism of the BJP as an anachronism of which any sensible person should be ashamed. I use the word, 'finally', because the record of the Indian communists is a mixed one, with doubts even about the extent of their commitment to the national cause still persisting. Such mis-givings are the result not only of their dubious role in 1942, but also because of the patent reluctance on the part of many of them to condemn China in 1962 on the ground that a socialist country cannot commit aggression, and because in a conflict between a country of the proletariat and a country of the bourgeoisie, it is the former which has to be supported. Strains of that ideology continued well into the 1960s and early 1970s when the pro-Chinese naxalites broke away from the CPI(M) because the latter was not pro-Chinese enough.

Even after coming to power in West Bengal and Kerala in the 1960s, the communists did not quite know how to reconcile their revolutionary dogmas with the practical as well as inescapable proposition of functioning within a bourgeois framework. The result was, first, the appearance of the naxalites who thought that the time had come to put Mao Zedong's ideals into action and, second, the increase in the number of violent clashes between different communist groups which looked upon the sojourn in power

as a period when their influence could be extended with the help of official clout.

The end result was, of course, the collapse of the United Front governments and the Congress (I)'s return to power. And that may well have been the end of communism as a party of government in India if Indira Gandhi had not made the mistake of turning fascist herself. It was the Emergency which compelled all the political parties across the spectrum, from Jana Sangh on the right to the CPI(M) and even the CPI(M-L) on the left, to band together. And thereby hangs the tale. For, while uprooting the evil of one fascist force, the seeds of another were sown which bore fruit a mere 12 years later when, in 1989, the BIP polled 11% of votes and won 88 seats in the Lok Sabha.

In some respects, the BJP's emergence as a major force is one of the most frightening things to have happened in recent years, for it represents perhaps the most retrograde social and political elements that have ever stalked the Indian political scene. By a strange quirk of fate, the Indian freedom movement was led by people of rare enlightenment who not only fought for independence, but were guided by a social vision that was free of all paro-chialism and bigotry. Little wonder that the fire of their passionate belief in India's multicultural and pluralistic destiny burnt away the dross of the RSS and Hindu Mahasabha.

Even then, it was one of those narrow escapes, for there were politicians just below the level of Gandhi and Nehru who harboured sentiments that were not all that different from those propagated by Guru Golwalkar and others. Among them were frontline figures like Madan Mohan Malaviya, who presided over a Hindu Mahasabha conference in 1923, Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad. But such was the impact of Gandhi's all-embracing tolerance and Nehru's broad outlook untainted by communalism that the pro-Hindu lobby in the Congress not only failed to make any headway, but even became reformed enough to echo secular sentiments.

But it was too good to last, for inevitably, the degeneration of the country's political life after independence could not but ensure that those who saw India through distorted lenses would gradually come to the fore. It is therefore not surprising that the denigration of Gandhi and Nehru-not in word but in deed -by the Congress itself has led to the BJP's emergence as a mainline party. What is worse, the party of Gandhi and Nehru now not only seems incapable of offering it a stiff challenge, but sometimes even tries to play the same divisive card to erode the BUP's base, not realizing that the defeatism evident in trying to emulate the enemy strengthens the BJP and makes it act with greater boldness.

If the long years in power have undermined the Congress(I)'s will to fight the BJP, the other non-communist parties are little better, composed as they mostly are of people whose anti-Congress stance was the only factor that brought them together. As the failure in 1979 and 1990 of the two attempts to form an anti-Congress government at the centre showed, such parties do not have much of a future in Indian politics in spite of the Congress(I)'s progressive degeneration which is increasingly exposing a big void at the political centre. In the states, the void has been filled to some extent by regional parties like the Dravida Kazaghams in Tamil Nadu and the communists in West Bengal and Kerala. But the attempt to transform a patchwork of such parties into a viable alternative to the Congress(I) at the centre has been a miserable failure.

It is hardly surprising, then, that there is a sense of drift in Indian politics today. As E.M.S. Namboodiripad has pointed out, the days when a single party could get a majority in the Lok Sabha are over. Even the BJP, for all its lofty claims, cannot hope to scale such heights. But what it has succeeded in achieving, and for which the communists are partly responsible since they once joined an anti-Congress(I) front with the BJP, is to give a dangerously rightist turn to Indian politics, negating the cherished principles of the freedom struggle.

Apart from the boost this has given to Hindu revivalist forces, spreading fear and despondency among the minorities, the BIP has also contributed to the lowering of public debate in a manner that was once unthinkable. Nothing shows this more than the viciously anti-Muslim slogans which have gained currency. Any other political party would have been deeply ashamed of such slogans and the kind of vituperative utterances which have brought. notoriety to one of their women campaigners. But the BJP seems to thrive on such crudeness, presumably because it helps them to mobilize the lumpen elements who are indispensable in today's violent electoral politics.

Given the Congress(I)'s anaemic condition, and the state of organizational disarray in which the other parties with all-India pretensions find themselves, the communists (and Laloo Prasad Yadav in Bihar) are apparently the only force which can take on the BJP. The leftists may not have an all-India spread, confined as their influence is to West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura and Bihar. But they do have an adequate presence in both the political and intellectual worlds at the national level to be able to counter the BJP propaganda, especially when the latter has none of the respectability which arguments based on academic research or sophisticated learning сагту.

Despite its collapse, Marxism in its pristine form still has an appeal because of the distinctive way in which it seeks to analyze history, thereby giving it a touch of modernity whose attraction is undeniable. It is a world far removed from medieval superstitions, religious intolerance and demeaning social norms. The atheism inherent in the creed automatically acts as a guard against the growth of narrow fundamentalism (although Marxism did breed its own brand of fundamentalism, thereby hastening its demise). The communists, then, could have provided the right antidote for the sectarian poison which the BIP is merrily injecting into the country's body politic, paving the way for civil strife and perhaps a second partition. But the communist

record in office will act as a hindrance. For this the CPI(M) is largely to blame, for it has emulated the Congress(I) by confirming that the only road a party can take while in power is downwards. Its 15 long years in office in West Bengal has robbed the CPI(M) of all its ideological vigour and organizational discipline, turning the party into a slothful, corrupt and insensitive outfit out of touch with the popular mood.

Little wonder, then, that the BJP has made remarkable headway in a state where it was previously regarded with contempt. Between 1987 and 1991, its percentage of votes went up from 0.5 to 11.4, a highly creditable performance comparable with the jump from 7.4% in 1984 to 21.9% in 1991 at the national level. This kind of progress would not have been possible if the CPI(M) had retained its image of a party committed to ushering in a more responsive government. Instead, the party's degeneration coupled with the Congress(I)'s failure to redeem itself have compelled the voters to turn to what they believe to be a third alternative.

It is unlikely that the BJP will progress any further in West Bengal. But the damage has been done so far as the CPI(M) is concerned, for the BJP has shown itself capable of bearding the lion in its own den. A setback in its own base means that the CPI(M) will not find it easy to launch an offensive against the BJP at the national level, at least on its own. To make such an endeavour successful, it will clearly have to enlist the support of others like the Janata Dal, which was once its 'natural ally'.

Perhaps the communists should approach the Congress (I) as well, appealing to its secular tradition, even though it has been hedging its bets lately. But such a turn of events will mean that the political scene will be polarized between the BJP and anti-BJP formations, just as it was once divided between two groups for and against the Congress. The reason for this is obvious. If there was once such a gang-up against the Congress, the reason was that it represented a force which had to be curbed for the sake of the

country. The same perception may now work against the BJP.

Although the Indian communist parties are prone to splits, it is noteworthy that the most momentous event in the communist world after 1917—the collapse of the Soviet Union—had virtually no impact on their organizational structure. Contrast this with the reveberations of the Sino-Soviet split which divided the communist world down the middle. But so far as the latest developments in the Soviet Union are concerned, the CPI(M) chose to regard them as no more than an aberration while the CPI, traditionally more sensitive about Moscow than the others, toyed with the idea of converting the party into a social democratic organization but shied away in the end.

he reason for this strange lack of response is simple enough. For a start, the Indian communist's dependence on borrowed ideology is total not so much because he has been reared on it as because he has practised it in a vacuum, as it were, where the pros and cons of Marxism have never been tested against the realities of practical life. The result is that they still believe something to be true simply because it has been so prescribed in the textbooks. The naxalites, for instance, still harbour the illusion that they can mobilize enough support among the peasantry to surround and overwhelm the towns because they have never quite waged the kind of battle which the Chinese did. So, it is a dream sequence for them which can be fulfilled in India.

The CPI(M) and the CPI live in a similar unreal world, pretending to be under pressure like the Bolsheviks in Tsarist Russia while functioning in a tolerant, open society. In view of this hiatus between illusion and reality, the collapse of the Soviet Union remains inexplicable to them. The parties, therefore, do not face any internal rumblings on this score. The least they could have done was to analyze in greater depth the reasons which led to the Soviet collapse. But even they agree that it was the lack of touch with the common people in whose name the communist parties are supposed to

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function which rang the death-knell for the CPSU and the Eastern European parties. There is clearly a lesson to be learnt from this. But the Indian communists have scrupulously avoided a thorough appraisal lest it show up both their intellectual bankruptcy and continuing adherence to the same style of functioning, probably born of inertia.

Unlike the dichard CPM, the CPI could have given a lead in this respect (if only because it does not suffer from the constraints of office) by taking a more liberal view of the Marxist failures. The party's decision to extol Vivekananda, Nanak and Kabir showed that it did have a faint awareness of having lost touch with the Indian social scene. But nothing further has been considered in concrete terms. This lack of enthusiasm probably stems from the fact that a perceptive analysis will threaten the existing leadership. Set in the old ways, the leaders might have resented any individual or group coming forward with fresh ideas which went beyond the stereotypes. But there has been no such development either. Dissent has remained confined to factional feuds (as in the Congress), the only difference being that such battles are often couched in ideological jargon.

However, there are a few who question the current dichotomy between participation in bourgeois politics and the supposed adherence to revolutionary doctrine. So various groups have raised the banner of revolt in what is clearly a continuation of what happened in 1967 when the naxalites thought that the coming to power of the communist-led government in West Bengal signalled the beginning of the revolution. But since not everyone in the communist parties agreed, they fell apart.

Such dissensions, therefore, are a reflection of the conflicting perceptions of the line to be pursued. Indeed, the very presence of so many communist parties points to the same thing. But they do not pose any major threat to the leadership of the two main parties as such. The essentially middle and upper class leadership has become such an integral part of the ruling establishment

(which now includes the BIP as well apart from the Congress) that it is quite beyond the capacity of the motley dissident groups to effect a change. Clearly the initial hesitation which made the communist ministers remove air-conditioners from their offices in 1967 has yielded to a liking for the power and pelf of office that has long been associated with their opponents. The leaders may face a challenge from rivals within the organization, but that is part of the political culture which they have readily adopted.

Tiven this absorption into the prevailing political milieu, it is unlikely that the communists will pitch into a battle against the liberalization of the economy with as much gusto as when they burnt trams in Calcutta in protest against the then World Bank president, Robert Mc-Namara's visit. They will be loud in their protests, of course, organizing processions and even bandhs, not to mention delivering fiery specches. But nothing beyond that, no resignations from office or boycott of Parliament. In effect, their protest will be no more radical than that of left-leaning Congressmen who may not be too happy about the entry of multinationals or the closure of public sector units, but will stop short of doing anything to rock the government. Nor is this surprising considering the pragmatism which Jyoti Basu has introduced in West Bengal, inviting new private enterprises and allowing old private companies like the Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation to expand.

The Indian communists, then, are in a strange situation where they refuse to acknowledge that their ideology is dead in the country where it was first tried out and yet, at the same time, their actions at home have in any case little to do with the ideology in terms of personal lifestyle or economic orientation. So, even there, their ideology can well be described as dead-or at least not very alive. But if they seem least concerned about such resemblance, it is probably because they realize that no one took them seriously in the first place, regarding them as players in a game in which everyone from across the spectrum took part.

# In step with the world

AJAY KUMAR

THERE is nothing that compares with an election manifesto in mapping a political party. It is the most cogent, the most comprehensive, and even in the Indian context, the sincerest document of assessment, promise and action by a political party. The electorate does not take the manifesto seriously, but those who draft it certainly do.

Thus, before every election the Congress president always sets up a high-powered drafting committee to draft the manifesto. The drafting committee set up before the May 1991 elections was headed by P.V. Narasimha Rao. The then Congress president, Rajiv Gandhi, spent much time over the manifesto, getting its focus sharpened, its prose simplified and even its grammar straightened. Finally he gave his seal of approval and the manifesto was sent off to the printers. Then he had second thoughts and wanted the party's commitments to be made more categorical. The manuscript was recalled and a chosen aide was asked to append an action plan. Thus, for the first time, a Congress election manifesto had specific commitments about what its government would do over the 'first 100 days', 'the first 365 days', 'the first 700 days', and the 'first 1000 days'.

Consider, therefore, the following sample of commitments from the manifesto. Within the first 100 days a Congress government would:

\*Arrest the price rise in essential commodities and, in particular, roll back to the level of the July 1990 prices of diesel, salt, electric bulbs etcetera.

- \*Increase interest rates for small savings.
- \*Pass a bill to maintain the status quo as of 15 August 1947 for places of worship.

Within the first 365 days it would:

- \*Create 10 million jobs.
- \*Offer stock of public sector companies to workers and small and medium investors among the general public.
- \*Throw open construction of toll highways and toll bridges to the private and joint sector.
- \*Fill all vacancies at the board level in public sector enterprises.

It is not important that many of the promises have not been fulfilled nor that many of the promises were unrealistic. What is certainly important is how accurately the action plan is a mirror to the party.

To start with, take the need for such a plan. This need would only suggest itself to those who combine a corporate, result-oriented approach with a political bravado that would deter a more seasoned politician. Then, the mish mash nature of the promises, where the impractical, the impossible and the mundane jostle with the visionary. Does it really matter to the voter if all vacancies at board level to PSUs are filled? Was it ever possible to create 10 million jobs in a year? On the other hand, it was certainly significant that the manifesto spoke of toll highways and toll bridges in the private sector. That showed not merely that the highest in the party were in touch with the real state of the infrastructure, it also showed they had fresh ideas on how to tackle the problem.

It was possible to think, then, that the party might also contemplate similar solutions for the ills afflicting other parts of the infrastructure: phones, surface transport, ports, perhaps even banks. In fact, the draft of the action plan actually had a commitment to roll back bank nationalization but Rajiv Gandhi balked at committing himself to it. What is most important, however, is how timid the manifesto looks compared to what the Congress government has done with the economy in the past year. Gone is the intricate, stifling, hypocritical cobweb of power and discretion—the whole empire of case-by-case approach erected in the late 1960s and 1970s. Industrial licensing, MRTP, FERA—all have been defanged. Profit-maker, capitalist, multinationalonce considered unsavoury characters by a party committed to socialism, have suddenly become saviours.

And all this from a cast of characters that nobody could imagine would wear such clothes and speak such lines. Those who have been advocating liberalization for somewhat longer than the present lot tell the story of what happened to a plan to open up the economy prepared soon after Rajiv Gandhi came to power. The plan was quickly consigned to the backburner by a triumverate comprising a senior bureaucrat in the Prime Minister's office, the deputy chairman of the Planning Commission and the seniormost Cabinet Minister. Their names: Gopi Arora, Manmohan Singh and P.V. Narasimha Rao, respectively.

Surely, it can be argued, it rebounds to their credit that these worthies are not dogmatic. Yes, certainly. It speaks well for the political savvy of the Congress that it is the only party which has drawn the right economic lessons from not merely its own past mistakes but also the experience of the erstwhile socialist bloc. Today, it is the only party in step with the world.

It is a tremendous coup for the Congress that it has so devastated

the BJP, by hijacking its middle-class oriented economic agenda, that the BJP is left blubbering about some antediluvian concepts like swavlamban and muttering against the MNCs in a manner so reminiscent, ironically, of the communists. Crucially, the BJP has been forced to become a one-issue party: the Mandir-a high risk strategy in a basicaly secular nation. It is also creditable for the Congress that it has created an identity crisis in the Janata Dal. Not only have the Mandal fires been doused. the Janata Dal has lost its equity platform with the Congress deftly lining up behind Mandal. What is then left of the Janata Dal is a casteist shell, redeemed only partly by mavericks like Biju Patnaik who can still put the nation above the party.

Most importantly, their casteist and communal focii have so underlined the partisan appeal of the Janata Dal and the BIP respectively (as also the communist parties), that it has brought out in greater relief than ever before that the Congress is the only all-embracing party. In a polity like India's, straining at the sides and still grappling with the most basic problems of unity, development and equity, the maximum space in the political arena continues to be at the centre.

Under the amateurish and impulsive tutelage of Rajiv Gandhi the Congress often tended to overlook this. Departures from the Congress mean—like the opening of the Ayodhya temple, the shilanyas and the launching of the 1989 election campaign from Ayodhya-would often raise doubts about the party's sensitivity to the country's basic problems. Then came Bofors in April 1987, freezing Rajiv and the party into a defensive posture from which it never really came out. Worse, through all this Rajiv Gandhi continued to be confrontationist, even labelling the opposition 'antinational'. Yet, Rajiv was a Nehru-Gandhi, and whether he wanted it or not, a born leader. His writ ran in the party.

Narasimha Rao could not have been more different from Rajiv Gandhi—and he has used this to advantage. Rajiv had the image of a yuppie, so he could not have opened up the economy without inviting the charge of elitism. Besides, he would have been so confrontationist that the patient—the Indian polity—would have rejected the bitter but necessary medicine—namely restructuring the economy.

Rao never gave any indication, unlike Rajiv, of impatience with the Nehru-Gandhi legacy on the economy. He was reputed for his ability to see all sides of an issue. In party and government circles, this was translated as indecisiveness. Among bureaucrats, any proposal sent to a group of ministers (GoM) headed by Rao was said to have Gom with the wind'. How, then, has Rao succeeded in tackling the Indian economy's programmes as boldly as he has? Firstly, by appointing a reputed economist with a clean reputation as the Finance Minister. Then, his consensual style, contrasting sharply with Rajiv's confrontationist one. has been a great help. As a perceptive aide said: 'Rajiv would probably have been even bolder in what he wanted to do with the economy but he would have achieved less because he would have put up too many backs.'

What is important, however, is the fact that nobody has an alternative. When the Russian economy is crumbling and China's is not because it has already developed a vigorous market economy, who has another viable philosophy for growth? A society built on the profit motive may not be as idyllic as the one that allocates from each according to his ability to each according to his need', but that philosophy has proved to be unworkable. Closer home, and more prosaically, it was accepted a long time ago that the public sector had become a parasite. The one debate that Rajiv Gandhi did raise and typically could not clinch—was on the public sector.

Since Rao came to power, several implosive strands have come together. A party which swore by a certain creed for four decades has turned this creed on its head. A leadership nurtured on the concept of the government occupying the commanding heights of the economy has been compelled to sound enthu-

siastic about the government confining itself to managing the core (and that too not exclusively), developing the infrastructure and nurturing health and education. This has been done by a political executive which still lacks conviction in the new economic policies but is pragmatic enough to accept that there is no alternative. This executive knows that restructuring the economy will be painful in the short term but lacks the courage to say this to the nation. It is also known that it is by no means certain that these policies will rescue the economy just as it is clear that there is no alternative. This, too, is a well kept secret.

L hen again, because its current economic agenda did not quite clearly grow out of its own manifesto, it has a serious credibility problem. It is extremely vulnerable to the charge of the 'foreign hand'. It does not help itself by being less than candid; it stands exposed when the press details how it has given commitments and disclosures to its foreign creditors that it denies to its people. The nation is bankrupt and needs external capital. But there is a worldwide capital crisis, so the nation has to promise more and more to lure the capital. This reinforces its credibility problem; even FICCI complains about discrimination against the Indian industrialist. More foreign debt is imperative so it is actively sought; but that, too, makes an easy political target.

External credit will not come till the belt is further tightened at home. This slows down the economy as capital expenditure is cut since the white-collar parasites cannot be disciplined nor their productivity increased. Thus, the allocation for anti-poverty programmes and the social structure is reduced giving the party an anti-poor image.

This happens in a party which was systematically de-democratized over two decades and made an appendage of its leader. All decisions travelled up, all the way to the top. Only the 'high command' did the party's thinking. The partyperson surrendered his/her soul, expecting only to be returned to power. Dissent equalled disloyalty and debate was forgotten. A party

built on sacrifice became a party comprised solely of vested interests. The percentage of honest Congress persons was put at 'maximum 10%' by an aide close to Rajiv Gandhi.

As all this has impacted, the results have been mixed. The party never had too many thinking types but the suspension of debate in the party has meant that there has been no real dissent about the new economic policy. At the only AICC session held in this period, the pandals were empty when the economic resolutions were moved. Tirupati became a byword for elections to the working committee, no more. Even if debate was desired, it would not have been possible because the party has no forum for it. Policy decisions are taken by a small group and then handed down for implementation by a larger group which has a vested interest in scuttling them. Important sections of the party continue to have serious doubts about important aspects of the new economic policy, notably the ad hoc way in which the public sector is being sold away. According to them, assets built painstakingly are being hawked cheap.

Enough senstivity is not shown to the need for more jobs, they feel. In the West, which we are trying to emulate, unemployment above 5-6% is considered horrifying; here we have 9% recorded unemployment and we do not have a policy to encourage growth that would create more jobs. The service industry is clearly our best bet: we have the skills and the intelligence, but there is no policy to maximize our comparative advantage there. Because too many heads are not put together a holistic view does not emerge.

Since the foreign creditor is so important, there is much preening to impress him. Decisions are bunched and announced on the eve of crucial meetings with the IMF and World Bank. Important decisions are announced on foreign soil which then take an inordinately long time to get implemented as ministers fight turf battles. The political executive feels that an insensitive bureaucracy, led by ministers who are basically bureaucrats, are making too many policy decisions. A section of bureau-

crats, alleges an important minister, is actually saying the country should forget considerations of equity for several years as it restructures the economy.

On the plus side is the fact that the people are by and large with the government. It is worth recalling that the Indian electorate's honeymoon with Rajiv Gandhi had its first jolt when the government hiked petroleum prices marginally in early 1986. This government increased petroleum prices in September to fetch an impressive Rs. 6000 crores in a full year and the people have not complained a bit. The Russian experience has shown that if goods are not priced in relation to their cost, the innards of a nation get eaten. It has, of course, helped that inflation has slowed down and that, thanks to an unexpectedly good monsoon, the kharif crop will be good.

Nowever, if there is one thing that has kept this party and government buoyed up, it is the image of the Prime Minister. He has not gone out of the way to communicate to the people compared to Rajiv Gandhi he hardly gets around the country—but that is not a negative with the people. Everybody knows he is old and had almost retired from politics. But he is wise. He does not take head-on emotional tamashas like the BJP's Kanyakumari to Kashmir yatra; he lets the BJP resident go to Srinagar and make a fool of himself. He is an intellectual, as a brahmin is expected to be. He is wily but not devious. He has Chandraswamy at home virtually everyday but no dirt sticks on him.

He talks level, does not patronize and spouts no jargon. He seems to have an open mind but on some principles he can be extremely mulish. He got stuck on holding party elections and in Punjab. The first were flawed but have set the stage for the next to be genuine. The second too was flawed but seems to have made all the difference in tackling the terrorists.

He is boring and dull but he is obviously cautious. He has no charisma but he speaks from the heart and he sounds sincere. His

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Finance Minister calls the stockmarket scam an 'aberration' but he is candid enough to say it has hurt. One leading industrialist gushed after hearing him at the October FICCI annual meeting: 'You mark my words, he will be the greatest Prime Minister we lave had. And I have worked closely with several of them.'

The danger is that this Prime Minister may like to become Narasimha Gandhi. Already he has shown no unease at being the Congress president and the Prime Minister. The party, like the nation, works on patronage and party patronage is just as important as the government's. There is a strong section in the party close to him and credited with a high degree of political acumen which believes that this nation will hold only if the polity is federal and the party unitary. The high command, says this section, must assert itself. Rao does not disagree. He showed steadfastness in wanting party elections despite persuasive advice to the contrary. But full democratization of the party is clearly not on his agenda. When the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister was to be replaced, the observers sent down by the party president were given a simple objective: get the legislature party to pass a one-line resolution authorizing the party president to decide on his replacement.

Rao has been similarly singleminded in pursuing India's interests in the world. Israel has been recognized, India has not budged from its stand on the NPT, the space programmes have been pursued with the old vigour, and Pakistan has been engaged in a dialogue even as it is told what it should not do. Business has been married with diplomacy as the Prime Minister has chosen his bilateral visits with great care—to Japan and Germany, which have the money to invest, and to France—which has the technology, particularly in defence and space, and is willing to do business even as the US frown on dual use technology gets darker.

India badly needs money and technology from the West but, that did not deter Rao from warning against the 'new tyranny' of the only superpower left when he spoke at the first-ever summit of the Security Council. Japan and Germany have better arguments to be in the Council but India has been forthright in demanding a restructuring of the Council. All this is in sharp contrast with the woolly-headedness of the V.P. Singh regime when India either withdrew into its shell or walked into disasters like the Iraq-Kuwait policy. It could not have been more clear that only the Congress has a worldview.

It is instructive, in conclusion, to recall the situation a few months after Rao came to power. His government's parliamentary majority was thin; his health was said to be shaky; the leadership challenge mounted by Sharad Pawar was still fresh, and even a political lightweight like Madhavrao Scindia thought of himself as an aspirant. Even ministers would speculate about whether the government would last three months or six months.

Today, he has swelled his party's strength by forays into regional configurations but it has been done in such a low-key manner that he is not labelled a party breaker. In the party, there is no challenge to his leadership. The ghost of Sonia Gandhi has been laid to rest, largely by herself. Arjun Singh takes postures by writing off angry letters but the most realistic assessment is that he is only manoeuvring to remain as the number two. Besides, the Churhat hearings continue in the Supreme Court. Rao's strategy is: give them a long rope and the oversmart ones will hang themselves with it.

In the end, however, the Congress's best bet is with the economy. If the government can get the phasing of reforms right, if it can show the courage to take some more strategic decisions to get exports going, if it can show imaginativeness to encourage job-creating activities, if it can start building up its sinews to take on the white-collar parasites -if it can do all this, Rao could continue to surprise. One thing is certain: only the Congress seems capable of attempting all this; the ideas bank of all other parties is bankrupt. To have established this is Rao's greatest achievement.

# Struggling to survive

BHARAT BHUSHAN

SUCH was the enthusiasm generated by the formation of the Janata Dal four years ago that the fledgling party was catapulted into power within a year of its coming into being. Yet today not even an inveterate gambler would put his money on the Janata Dal being able to provide a government at the centre. For most people the question is no longer whether the party can stage a political comeback but whether it can survive at all.

Two questions that need to be answered about the Janata Dal are: Why did it disintegrate so rapidly? And, in what form can it hope to survive in the future? Since all the experiments in non-Congressism have tended to meet the same fate as that of the Janata Dal, the question of its falling apart can be addressed in a broader context. The answer that holds good for the Janata Dal might also do so to some extent for the fate of the Samyukta Vidhayak Dal (svd) governments that briefly dislodged the Congress

from power in north India in 1967 and the post-Emergency Janata Party.

I would argue that the reason for the rapid falling apart of the non-Congress formations in power is to be found in their inadequate organizational structure. To demonstrate this proposition, one first needs to understand the structure of the preeminent centrist party of India—the Congress Party—and the limitations of replicating its structure by the centrist opposition. The centrist political parties in India, including the Congress, are not primary membership controlled parties. And they are certainly not cadre-based parties like the communist parties or the right-wing Hindu chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party which draws upon the cadre of its parent body, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. How then does one understand the Congress party? The Congress party as a political body is organized and reorganized each time an election is held. It is a pre-electoral alliance that is carefully put together taking into account different caste and community interests in each state. These pre-electoral alliances in the states are held together by the prospect of power.

It would seem that the most effective reorganization of the Congress at the level of the states takes place in the wake of a national electoral victory. This is particularly evident in the Indira Gandhi era when the Congress was reorganized twice—first in the period following the 1969 split and the second time after the 1978 split. However, what is remarkable is that in both cases the reorganization of the Congress in the states followed major general election victories—the 1971 midterm victory in the former case and the 1980 come-back of Indira Gandhi in the latter.

However, the Congress party is not merely an ad hoc pre-electoral alliance. The evolution of the party through the freedom movement and subsequently has also created conflict resolution mechanisms within the party. Thus there is the high command at one level to arbitrate over conflicts. At the other levels. too, there are party fora where certain conflicts can be resolved through discussion, bargaining and debate. Over time, these structures may have become autocratic and centralized in the person of the an all-powerful, charismatic Prime Minister-cum-President of the party. The point, however, is that even if weakened over time, mechanisms have continued to exist within the Congress party to control factional competition and to prevent it from tearing the party asunder.

Thus, for example, a well-established ritual does exist for changing chief ministers against whom there is excessive dissidence. After much washing of dirty linen in public, central observers are sent to assess the level of dissidence and its causes, delegations of partymen opposed to the incumbent chief minister get to meet them and the party president sends signals of approval or disapproval of the activities of the dissidents by either meeting them, not meeting them or by meeting them after a prolonged period of time. And if a change in the state legis-

lative party does become necessary, there is hardly ever a secret ballot to choose the new leader, the final decision being invariably left to the party president or the high command.

But curiously, in an overwhelming majority of the cases, the conflict does get resolved with the selection of a new leader. The ousted person patiently resigns himself to licking his wounds waiting for better days and the party does not break up. Even if this method of conflict resolution does not seem democratic in a formal sense, it nonetheless helps a democratically elected Congress state government to survive its full term

Now, the tragedy of the centrist non-Congress parties in India has been that they have blindly tried to replicate the structure of the Congress. And their primarily organizational disadvantage has been that they have lacked the conflict resolution mechanisms of the Congress. However, before contrasting this organizational situation further, it is necessary to understand what non-Congressism is.

The SVD governments of the mid-1960s, the Janata Party and its latter day avtar, the Janata Dal, are all rooted in the Lohiaite strategy of non-Congressism. The failure of the socialists and the rest of the opposition to make any legislative headway in the first two general elections in post-Independence India had led Ram Manohar Lohia to propound his thesis of non-Congressism. The primary elements of Lohia's non-Congressism opposition consolidation in general and within that a consolidation of the socialist programme, and the launching of joint action on a single issue agitating the public mind to oust the Congress.

Lohia would have perhaps liked to view non-Congressism as an ideological strategy of sorts. In fact, however, it was to become an argument for the end of ideology, born out of the frustration of the non-Congress centrist parties to come into power on the basis of clearly-defined programmes. Shorn of all its ideological justifications, Lohia's

non-Congressism was nothing more or less than a pre-electoral strategy to form an alliance against the Congress.

In the mid-1960s such an alliance had necessarily to take the form of a joint front since, given the immediate histories of the different opposition parties, they could not have merged to form a unified opposition party. In 1977, however, circumstances had made it possible for the non-Congress parties to merge and even the right-wing Jana Sangh temporarily merged its identity in the Janata Party. In 1988-89, both the processes—the formation of a unified party of the non-Congress opposition and of a united frontbecame possible.

But why would these non-Congress formations try to replicate the organizational structure of the Congress? The simple answer is that they were by and large controlled by ex-Congressmen. In 1967, the non-Congress governments except in Delhi and Madras, were Orissa, headed by ex-Congressmen. The chief ministers of the svD/United Front governments in UP (Charan Singh), Haryana (Rao Birendra Singh), Bihar (Mahamaya Prasad Bengal (Ajay Kumar Singh), Mukherjee) and Madhya Pradesh (Govind Narayan Singh) were all ex-Congressmen. In the 1977 Janata Party government, the Prime Minister, Morarji Desai and the party president, Chandra Shekhar were again both ex-Congressmen. When the party broke up in 1979-80, except for the Bharatiya Janata Party, all of its fragments were headed by ex-Congressmen: Charan Singh. Chandra Shekhar and Jagjivan Ram. In 1988, when the Janata Dal was formed, it crystallized around an ex-Congressman-V.P. Singh-and his Jan Morcha, once again a formation of ex-Congressmen.

It can be hypothesized that these ex-Congressmen, who for a variety of reasons became the leading lights of non-Congress formations, carried with them an organizational memory of the Congress. Either consciously or unconsciously, they tried to replicate what they considered the 'successful' organizational formula of the Congress. They did set up their

respective formations as alternative pre-electorate alliances to counter the Congress but ended up aping the Congress organizationally. Individually, they behaved as if they were still leading the Congress or a party akin to it structurally. They either had no institutionalized conflict resolution mechanisms or where they attempted to set them up, these mechanisms simply did not work.

Lt was the inability of the svn governments to resolve conflicts based on programme and the personal ambitions of faction leaders that ultimately led to their downfall. Thus the party was unable to contain conflicting ambitions and in Punjab and Bihar its governments were brought down through defections. Neither in UP nor in Bihar was the minimum agrarian reforms programme agreed upon implemented because of differences between the svp partners. The failure of the Janata party government in the period 1977-79 can also be attributed to the absence of an effective organizational structure that institutionalized conflict resolution.

In the case of the Janata Dal, the ineffectiveness of such mechanisms was evident in the party's formative period itself. Thus Ram Naresh Yadav chose to quit the party opposing the appointment of Mulayam Singh Yadav as the party president in UP. And in Bihar, Ram Sunder Das, then a V.P. Singh acolyte, resigned party presidentship when Raghunath Jha, a protege of Chandra Shekhar was appointed the chairman of the state parliamentary board.

Consider also the infamous case of Om Prakash Chautala's murderous antics in the Meham by-election. There was no formal mechanism within the Janata Dal which would have enabled it to check a chief minister on rampage. The very fact that each factional crisis led to the ad hoc formation of party sub-committees to examine it and the ultimate inability of these committees to resolve the crises shows the complete lack of conflict resolution mechanisms within the Janata Dal. It must be remembered that if Om Prakash Chautala was finally removed as the Chief Minister of

Haryana, it was not because any mechanism within the party had managed to bring him to book but because of a massive public outery against his misdoings. That the party was unable to contain factional competition even in its early days was also evident from the fact that no one could prevent Chandra Shekhar, for example, from declaring at every available opportunity that he did not accept V.P. Singh as his leader. And nor did Devi Lal, or even Ajit Singh consider him as their leader, as their subsequent actions showed.

In retrospect, it can be seen that in the last two experiments in non-Congressism-the Janata Party and the Janata Dal, factional conflict could not be resolved because even after the merger, the factions continued to behave as independent political entities. Indeed, they did eventually split up when the conflict became acute. It is worth reiterating that such an eventuality was far rarer in the Congress and this was not entirely because the charisma of an individual leader like Nehru or Indira Gandhi held the party together. It is the organizational conflict resolution mechanisms that have continued to exist in the Congress. even if in a weakened state, that have helped the party control factional strife.

Nowever, even today one cannot claim with any degree of certainty that the various constituents of the original Janata Dal have attained their minimum sustainable size after the various splits. Nor can one predict that among them they will not form new alliances. What one can say with some amount of confidence is that for the Janata Dal or its various constituents to survive. they would once again have to move towards a centrist ideology. Such an ideology by definition cannot be limited to a few caste groups and must necessarily mean something to everybody. That this indeed is likely to be the broad tendency is evident in the case of the party's erstwhile constituents such as the Shekhar-Devi Lal led Chandra Samajvadi Janata Party (SJP) and the Ajit Singh faction of the Janata Dal. The sip's brief romance with the Congress and power at the

centre was one indication of such a movement. Ajit Singh's relationship with the Congress is another indicator of the same process.

Even the Janata Dal seems to have realized that if it wants to remain an electoral viable party, then it must broaden its ideological platform to include issues other than job reservations for the 'Other Backward Castes' as recommended by the Mandal Commission. Thus the party leadership decided in September this year to broadbase its political campaign from Mandal alone to include opposition to the new economic policy, price rise, unemployment and corruption in high places.

L here is thus a definite indication that the party has finally realized that the law of diminishing returns from the Mandal platform has set in. Sharad Yadav's 'Mandal yatra' failed, after all, to evoke an enthusiastic response even in the Janata Dal-ruled Bihar. It would seem, for example from the Ramkola agitation, that the party is once again moving towards taking a broad pro-peasant line while attempting to keep its OBC-base. In Bihar, Laloo Prasad Yadav is trying to forge what he calls an 'M-Y' or a Muslim-Yadav alliance. In UP too, a similar thing is being attempted through efforts to bring V.P. Singh and Mulayam Singh Yadav together.

In North India, it seems, therefore, that the Janata Dal is attempting once again to set up what it considers a viable broadbased alliance. In the south—especially in Orissa and Karnataka—the party never had a backward castes base. In these two states the Janata Dal is likely to continue to exist as a party that would have a very different interest group composition than the state units in the north. Although one is hesitant to suggest it, it may well be that the future of the Janata Dal does not lie in pretending to be a homogeneous national party and that it may be able to survive better if it were to break up further as separate regional parties each putting together the locally most viable pre-electoral alliance to survive.

# Regional parties: reduced efficacy

HARISH KHARE

INCONGRUOUS though it may sound, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the bloody disintegration of the Yugoslav federation and the fitful progress of European unity have made ethnicity and sub-regionalism fashionable in this country. Only a few decades ago the national leadership and the intelligentsia simply refused to contemplate what would happen to the country if sub-regionalism was allowed to run its natural course. Today that prospect no longer seems to leave them so cold, even though the political system has not acquired any additional skills or maturity to deal with political manifestations of regional and sub-regional aspirations. At the same time the regional level political formations have suffered serious erosion, mostly from self-inflicted wounds.

In recent years many of the prevailing assumptions about our federal polity have been rendered somewhat questionable as the contours of regionalism, the quality of regional politicians and the relevance of regional political parties have changed. During the heyday of Indira Gandhi and later, Rajiv Gandhi, the image was of a strong authoritarian

centre, unmindful of regional aspirations, contemptuously indifferent to regional and local level politicians, their concerns and designs. The corresponding assumption was that in a massive, complex and pluralistic society like ours, it would not be possible for a group of policymakers, however enlightened and however well-informed, to appreciate the nature of problems at the grassroot level; therefore, the policy and programme conceived in and sought to be executed from New Delhi would, necessarily, be defective and deficient. It was further presumed that once the polity found the necessary ways and means of involving regional level political leaders meaningfully and genuinely in the decision-making process, many of the distortions, developmental and political, would get rectified.

At the core of all these assumptions was an unexamined belief that the imbalance in the centre-state relationship could be attributed to the Congress party's dominant position in the polity; and more particularly, to the dominance of the Gandhi family in the Congress party. The political needs of the Gandhi

family were presumed to be contrary to those of the regional parties and their aspirations. These needs countenanced habits, reflexes and attitudes which discouraged regional and local level initiative and participation. It was presumed that once the Congress monopoly in the polity and that of the Gandhi family in the Congress was considerably croded, the political system would return to a balanced relationship between the centre and the states, in which regional political parties would be able to demand an appropriate distribution of federal powers.

Nevertheless, the country had witnessed the rise and considerable success of a number of regional political parties. In Tamil Nadu, the AIADMK and the DMK had long been giving expressions to Tamil regional aspirations; in Punjab the Akali Dal, at various times, has successfully projected itself as the voice of the Sikh sub-nationalism; in Jammu and Kashmir the National Conference, under the tutelage of the Abdullah family, was regarded as the only legitimate voice of Kashmiri nationalism; the emergence 10 years ago of the Telugu Desam party and of N.T. Rama Rao as the personification of Telugu pride, was a direct response to a seemingly overbearing centre ruled by the Congress party. Similarly, the emergence of the Asom Gana Parishad in Assam was a passionate response to presumed Congress indifference to Assamese fears and aspirations.

Apart from these major regional parties, there are any number of smaller parties confined to one state like the Peasant and Workers Party in Maharashtra and Bansilal's Haryana Vikas Party. Then we also have in the entire North East region a number of similar political formations like the Nagaland People's Council, the Manipur People's Party, the Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti and the Meghalaya United Parliamentary Party, which are content to play at best a marginal role in state level politics.

Meanwhile, the country has also seen the birth as well as the demise of an important regional group in Gujarat in October 1990. Chimanbhai Patel delinked himself from the floundering fortunes of V.P. Singh and formed his own Janata Dal (Gujarat) and, within a few months, successfully projected himself as a custodian and defender of Guiarat's interests vis-a-vis the centre and a host of other enemies. But within a short span the Janata Dal(G) disappeared after the chief minister found it expedient to merge his party with the Congress. In a manner of speaking, neither the birth nor the eventual merger of the Janata Dal(G) can be seen as a genuine reflection of Gujarati interests; in the same category is also the recent split in the Telugu Desam Party, clearly indicating that in some ways regionalism is no longer the overriding, captivating sentiment which it was a few years

Kegionalism and regional parties have to be viewed in the light of the growing respectability ethnicity has come to acquire at home and abroad. In this context, the most glaring development is the resurrection of the Jharkhand movement in Bihar and the political compulsion of the Congress party to weaken the seemingly indomitable Laloo Prasad Yadav has forced the central leadership to be seen as aiding and abetting a division of Bihar. The ramifications of this push for a bifurcation of Bihar is bound to be felt in Maharashtra, where the demand for Vidarbha has long been pending, in Andhra Pradesh where the sentiment behind a separate Telengana has not entirely disappeared and in Uttar Pradesh where the demand for a hill state has already been conceded by the BJP in its manifesto.

Then, in recent years we have also witnessed the emergence of regional political leaders who may belong to a national party but who, for all practical purposes, are happy to perform the role of a regional politician. The self-appointed regional role enjoins them to give precedence to regional compulsions and politics in case of a conflict with the national requirements of their organization. In this context, Laloo Prasad Yadav in Bihar and Biju Patnaik in Orissa and increasingly Jagannath Mishra in Bihar Congress have been emerging as regional politicians. A somewhat similar role has been carved out for himself by Mulayam Singh Yadav in Uttar Pradesh, as also in Rajasthan, where the Janata Dal has split along their narrow sub-regional basis.

Insofar as regional parties derive. by and large, their initial inspiration and momentum from the dynamism and motivation of a single leader (say, N.T. Rama Rao in Andhra Pradesh) or a closed group of a handful of leaders (like the founding fathers of the Asom Gana Parishad), the eventful growth of regional parties becomes precariously predicated upon the leader's personality, predilections and peccadiloes. The party becomes hostage to the leader's aberrations, political and personal, especially if the party tastes success within a relatively short time. The leader then attributes this success less to the regional cause and more to his charisma. Consequently the regional cause appears secondary to him and he is quite willing to wind up shop as soon as it becomes expedient (as Bangarappa did with the Kranti Ranga Dal and Chimanbhai Patel did with his Janata Dal (Gujarat).

amil Nadu provides a classic example of the relationship between regional parties and the leader. M. Karunanidhi's political short-sightedness, after the 1989 assembly elections, made him unmindful of the dangers of flirting openly (and even illegally) with the LTTE: and his fatherly soft corner for his son made him indifferent to the all-tooobvious signs of resentment in the DMK ranks. The DMK had to pay a price because the leader was not at all amenable to the dictates of democratic and collective decision-making.

Again, it was Jayalalitha's personal resolve to avenge herself against real and imaginary insults heaped on her by the DMK and in her own AIADMK that first drove her to seek Karunanidhi's (barely constitutional) dismissal, and, later, to summon evangelical fury to ask the Tamil voters to visit retribution on the DMK for the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. After a few months these very personal qualities have come to hobble her approach to administration. In her perspective, the AIADMK is less a personification of Tamil regional

aspirations and more a gift of her charismatic personality to the people of Tamil Nadu.

Also, in Gujarat, too, the equation between a regional political formation and its leader was plainly distorted. Chimanbhai Patel had shown no hesitation in striking a during Indira posture which Gandhi's time would have been certainly construed as unpardonable defiance of the central leadership. Patel has demonstratively sought to make a nuisance of himself on issues like the allocation of Gandhar gas and the price Gujarat gets paid for the crude oil it produces. Earlier, in October 1990, he had sent his wife to the Gujarat-Madhya Pradesh border to whip up tendentiously a confrontation with anti-Narmada marchers, led by Baba Amte and Medha Patkar. His game-plan was simply to hamstring any move by the Gujarat Congress to question his right to remain in office even after he had lost his majority when the BJP decided to withdraw its support to him.

As a politician, Patel would fancy himself (like Devi Lal and R.K. Hegde) as a king-maker in national affairs, as well as someone more than just a regional leader. But in Gujarat he has shown considerable imagination and innovativeness in exploiting the regional sentiment. The irony is that Patel is not even a regional leader; at best, he is an unapologetic spokesman of the Patels (especially those belonging to the landed classes, the business community and the construction industry). But he has adroitly used regional sentiment to his political advantage (that, too, in a community that, for over two hundred years, has had international entanglement).

So the overall picture we have is one of an increasingly divergent group of political leaders with regional aspirations hijacking regional groups. At the same time, it is no longer certain that the very fact that a regional leader is relatively autonomous to call the shots in the state necessarily produces healthy results. It has been the unfortunate experience that regional leaders, once they acquire a certain degree

of political ascendancy, are intolerant of their political opponents as well as unwilling to submit themselves to canons of accountability. The manner in which Jayalalitha in Tamil Nadu and Chimanbhai Patel in Gujarat have felt it necessary to defy the centre and democratic norms, puts paid to the earlier assumption that the emergence of strong regional leaders would be a desirable thing.

he earlier expectation was that strong regional leaders (like a B.C. Roy in West Bengal or a G.B. Pant in Uttar Pradesh would act as a healthy antidote to a democratic central leadership; but now it is obvious that the regional leaders would be happy to be left alone to rule the state in as arbitrary a manner as they want, without any desire to confront the centre. No regional party has managed to leave behind a record which can be printed out as a distinct and better alternative model in competent and compassionate governance than provided by the national parties. Therefore it is no longer certain that the mere emergence of regional parties is an adequate condition for the growth of a healthy polity. Moreover, regional parties would need to redefine themselves if they do not want to get permanently reduced to the status of ineffective marginal groups, happy with a few crumbs coming their way.

As the national political exchange enters essentially a coalitional phase, regional parties may be co-opted as extremely junior partners as one or a combination of a few national parties cobble together a working majority at the centre. At the same time, differences in the economic, educational and social interests of regional middle classes, intermediate castes and the new classes are bound to overwhelm the unifying capacity of regional pride and manipulative skills of the leader. Moreover, as concerns of the national polity move away from egalitarian restructuring, the regional parties, too, are likely to fall prey to the new economic forces, especially those represented by the NRIs. In short, the regional parties appear increasingly ill-equipped to play a positive, and healthy role at state or national level.

# The left alternative

SITARAM YECHURY.

THE relevance and validity of the position adopted by various political formations in India today can be assessed only on the basis of the problems confronting the country and their suggested solutions. Such an approach would show that the position of the left today, irrespective of the tumultuous developments in the Soviet Union and former socialist East European countries, continues to be valid as the only viable alternative to resolve the country's problems. This is not only on the basis of the subjective aspirations of Indian people who fought for our freedom from the colonial yoke but also necessary to transform independent India into a modern, vibrant and self-reliant country.

It is necessary therefore to outline the main challenges before the country today. These are: (a) challenges to India's unity and integrity—specifically the secessionist threats in Punjab and Kashmir; (b) the challenges to the social fabric of the country—specifically the communal challenge and the continued casteist conflicts; (c) challenges to parliamentary democracy and democratic institutions—specifically the continued undermining of the federal basis of the Indian Union and the criminalization of politics; and (d) the economic strategy that would ensure growing prosperity for the Indian millions.

The attempt being made here is to validate the position of the left, especially its principal constituent the CPI(M), with reference to each one of these aspects, and to demonstrate that in contrast to the position taken by the other major formations, this is the only possible alternative not only to safeguard but to carry forward the consolidation of modern India.

The grave dimensions of the secessionist threats to our country in Punjab and Kashmir need no repe-

tition. It is necessary, however, to briefly recapitulate the emergence of these threats, if for no other reason but to demonstrate that much of this has been due to the principally opportunistic position adopted by the ruling Congress of placing its own electoral interestes above that of the country at large.

he country was witness to the patronage given to such forces, epitomized by Bhindranwale, in their initial years by the Congress (I). The Frankenstein that was let loose had to be contended, albeit not so successfully by Operation Bluestar in 1984. In Kashmir, the consistent opportunistic politicking to foist a Congress(I) government in the state, the undemocratic dismissal of the Farooq Abdullah government and the foisting of the G.M. Shah government only resulted in the growth of fundamentalist forces on the one hand and the alienation of the people on the other. Both converged to create an atmosphere in which the secessionist forces thrived.

Without going into further details, one must see how these developments could have been contained and thus prevented the loss of thousands of innocent lives and safeguarded the unity of our country. The left, particularly the CPI(M), had all along argued that the problems of Punjab and Kashmir have to be solved from the political point of view and not merely treated as law and order problems. Specifically concerning Punjab, the CPI(M) has always called for a political package on the basis of the Rajiv-Longowal Accord which transfers Chandigarh to Punjab and arrives at a settlement of the river waters dispute. Such a package was essential to wean away public support that the secessionists often evoked on the grounds of continued discrimination by the centre against Punjab. Even today, the extremists are running a campaign against the execution of General Vaidya's killers by contrasting it with the absence of any meaningful action against the culprits of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. By merely treating the Punjab problem as a law and order issue (of course stringent measures to curb terrorist activities are most essential), a lasting solution can never be found.

Similarly, with Kashmir, the left has for long demanded a demarcation between the fundamentalist forces who are out to separate Kashmir and join with Pakistan and the others who seek greater autonomy and independence. By treating this only as a law and order issue, the central government and the Congress continuously club them together, thereby weakening the possibility of a package to the Kashmiri people through democratic solutions to meet their genuine aspirations. The CPI(M) has consistently been suggesting that the provisions of Article 370, which have constantly been eroded over the past decades, should be strictly adhered to while means to integrate the Kashmiri people through various measures like appointments all India services should be undertaken. The lackadaisical and opportunist approach of the Congress(I) and the blatantly communal approach of the BJP seeking abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution have only contributed to the alienation of the people and perpetuation of the threat to our country's unity.

That communalism and casteism with the continues to play havoc with the social fabric of our country is all too obvious to need repetition. The last decade witnessed the rise of the communal scourge to unprecedented dimensions. Whipping up Hindu communalism, the BJP and its various outfits are seeking to catapult to power at the centre. While unleashing a campaign disturbingly reminiscent of fascism, they brand every patriotic Indian who values the secular tolerance of a multireligious society as being pseudosecular. In this process, these pseudo-Hindus have unleashed a series of ghastly inhuman riots that bring back memories of the bloody riots that characterized the partition of our country.

While the blatantly communal organizations of both the majority and minority varieties have to be expunged to maintain the secular-democratic fabric of our society, what has been the approach of the ruling Congress? The resolution on national integration adopted at the Bhavnagar session of the Congress

in January 1961 traces the origin and growth of these tendencies as well as others that threaten the integrity of India, to 'democracy, with widespread system of elections'. The resolution observed that 'under the cover of political and social activities the old evils of communalism, casteism, provincialism and linguism have appeared again in some measure...Communalism, which has in the past done so much injury to the nation, is again coming into evidence and taking advantage of the democratic apparatus to undermine this unity to encourage reactionary tendencies'.

By seeking to explain away the emergence of communalism and its continued recurrence in independent India with such a facile observation, the Congress officially has all along sought to mask the real issue behind the continued potency of such divisive trends in our society.

The left had all along held that divisive trends emanates from a fundamental contradiction that characterizes post-independent India and that contradiction lies in the attempt to build capitalism without eliminating the vestiges of feudalism. The Indian bourgeoisie which assumed the reigns of power after independence had to compromise with the feudal sections in order to maintain its class rule. The bourgeoisic was thus incapable of undertaking any thorough agrarian reforms that would break the shackles of feudal exploitation in India. Feudal production relations by themselves foster a social consciousness which seeks to perpetuate the divide between the people on the basis of religion and caste.

This inability must also be seen against the background of the conscious attempts that the British had made particularly after 1857 to consciously engender a division within the Indian people. This divide and rule policy and the political culture that it evolved had as its objective base the continued pre-capitalist feudal relations of production and agriculture. Hence any attempt to eliminate the basis on which these divisive trends thrive can be complete only if a thorough-going struggle against the

remnants of foudalism is undertaken, along the lines of the anti-imperialist struggle when the people of India, cutting across caste and religious barriers, united against the colonial oppressors.

Therefore, the continued existence and at many places the domination of feudal relations in India also had its political manifestations with political parties using these divisions for electoral purposes. Manifestations cannot be mistaken for the cause.

It has only been the left that has consistently argued that only a fullfledged agrarian revolution remove the basis of such a social consciousness that breeds communal and caste divisions. In today's conditions, this is all the more relevant. With regard to the continued caste divisions, the left, particularly the CPI(M), has repeatedly stressed that while certain palliatives like reservations are important to break the centuries old structure of social oppression, these by themselves cannot redress the social and economic oppression of the scheduled castes and tribes and the depressed sections of our society.

It is once again a question of the economic status of these sections. This cannot be improved in India unless radical agrarian reforms are undertaken, where these sections have the economic wherewithal to resist social oppression. The left, therefore, while supporting measures like reservations, has always regarded these as one, albeit minor, component of the policy measures necessary to alleviate the status of the oppressed sections of our society. This has been its approach both in terms of the reservations for the SC/ STs and the Mandal Commission report.

With this approach the left has not, as viciously argued by its detractors, abandoned the concept of class. In this case, there is no question of replacing caste by class. The left neither refuses to recognize caste distinctions, nor does it recognize only caste distinctions. Rather, it addresses itself to the concrete reality which combines the growing formation of an exploited class within

the existence of caste distinctions. It is this dual process that was recognized by the left: that while a major section of the oppressed class come from the oppressed castes in our society, inequalities can never be solved by ignoring class inequalities.

Our history is also witness to the fact that all variants of the anti-caste struggle that sought to fight in isolation from the main class struggle of our times have failed and produced pitiful results. Caste oppression has to be fought as a part of the contemporary democratic class struggle. Caste inequality and injustice have become an integral part of all modern class injustices. To remove them requires a common struggle of all the exploited strata irrespective of the caste to which they belong.

In sharp contrast, all variants of the ruling class parties have utilized caste conflicts and sought to divert the challenge of unemployment and poverty by pitting one section of the downtrodden castes against the other. It is only the left that has had a clear-cut position on these matters.

A hese challenges to our country's unity and integrity, both in terms of its territorial sovereignty and in terms of its society, combine together in a larger threat to the very existence of the federal polity that the Indian people embraced after independence. There are various disquieting factors that face us today. The criminalization of politics, the increased irrelevance of the actual individual voter's choice, the constant use of Article 356 of the Constitution and the role of Governors as surrogates of the central government, have all brought into question the issue of centre-state relations.

On all these issues the left has held a clear-cut position. With regard to electoral reforms, the CPI(M) has consistently argued in favour of proportional representation that removes the ridiculous situation of a party polling less than 50% of the vote getting more than 80% of the representation. Further, proportional representation would undermine the base of opportunist politicking which

continues to utilize caste and communal factors. The cPI(M) has persistently advocated the abrogation of Article 356 and suggested that Governors be elected to eliminate their role as agents of the central government. While these measures in themselves are necessary for maintaining the federal structure of our Union and Constitution, a more fundamental issue is at stake and this relates to how the unity of a country as vast as ours, inhabited by people of diverse cultures, languages and customs, can be maintained.

In the memorandum to the National Integration Council in 1968 the CPI(M) had stated with reference to the growing problems of disunity that a correct and scientific approach must be based on 'the realization that our country comprises of sevedeveloped and developing nationalities with their distinct, and separate languages and corresponding cultural frames of mind, notwithstanding the existence of certain common features of all-Indian cultural background and economic and political interests'. It concluded that unity of the Indian Union can be effectively defended and the process of national integration can be carried forward only by a consistent application of democratic principles and methods to one and all aspects connected with this issue'.

The CPI(M) programme in 1964 states although our state structure is supposed to be a federal one practically all power and authority is concentrated with the central government. The constituent states of the Indian Union enjoy very limited power and opportunities; their autonomy is formal. This makes these states precariously dependent on the central government, restricts their development and other nation-building activities and thus hinders their progress.... It is but natural that in such a situation the contradiction between the central government and the states should have grown. Underlying these contradictions often lies the deeper contradiction between the big bourgeoisie on the one hand and the entire people including the bourgeoisie of this or that state on the other. This deeper contradiction gets constantly aggravated due to the accen-

tuation of the unevenness of economic development under capitalism'.

These suggestions were not accepted by either the Congress or the other political formations of the ruling class. The net result has been the growing hiatus between the centre and the states, fuelling the divisive tendencies further.

L his issue must also be seen from a different perspective. After more than four decades of independence, sections of the hitherto oppressed peoples amongst the tribals and others have acquired a social consciousness to rebel against their conditions. Their enhanced aspirations. which are not tackled in a democratic manner, have resulted in growing secessionist demands. The cpi(M) has consistently advocated that such problems can be resolved only by granting greater autonomy to these sections in the areas where they are in a majority. Witness the tackling of the Gorkhaland agitation by the Left Front government of West Bengal and the autonomous district councils set up by the Left Front government in Tripura to ensure the integration of these sections.

While the Congress, ostensibly upholding the federal structure of the Constitution, is increasingly moving towards a unitary state, the BIP advocates the division of the existing states into smaller units negating the struggle of the various nationalities in our country which resulted in linguistic reorganization of the states. By tampering with the linguistic, cultural and other traditions of the various nationalities that comprise our vast country, the BIP's policies will only increase the divisive tendencies.

As stated earlier, the entire task of maintaining the unity and integrity of the country in all its manifestations can only be undertaken through a democratic approach. Central to this is the question of decentralization of power and authority. It is not a mere coincidence that the only states where such decentralization has been undertaken and regular democratic elections are held to panchayat level bodies are West Bengal and Kerala. Therefore,

with respect to the larger issues of democracy, so crucial to the unity and integrity of our country, it is only the left that, both in precept and practice, has been advocating a consistently progressive position.

As mentioned earlier, the inherent contradiction of the bourgeoisie's attempt to develop capitalism in alliance with the feudal forces has also generated a very deep imbalance in the path of capitalist development in our country. Neither is it theoretically possible nor has it been practically demonstrated anywhere in the world that capitalism can thrive without eliminating feudalism. Two important consequences follow from the adoption of such a strategy. First, the vast mass of the rural poor continue to be subjected to increased oppression and exploitation. Second, in economic terms the domestic market in the country continues to be limited due to the improverished levels of the vast millions.

Radical agrarian reforms, especially land reforms, are necessary not only for ameliorating the condition of the poor but also for creating a domestic market on whose basis capitalism can develop further. This is demonstrated by the experience of West Bengal in the last decade. Land reforms unleashed productive forces in agriculture, generating a surplus that feeds the growing working class for the process of industrialization.

Unable to adopt such a course and by betraying the agrarian revolution, the Indian bourgeoisie had to increasingly rely on that small strata of our society that had the purchasing power and, at a later stage, an overseas market. Both these the consumption goods for the Indian elite and the export market-required a technology that increasingly propelled the Indian bourgeoisie towards foreign capital. In the process they abandoned their own slogans of self-reliance and a socialist pattern of society (which were necessary at one time for the growth of capitalism in the country).

The present leadership has embarked upon a path of economic liberalization. The left, far from being insular or anachronistic, has taken the position that such liberalization, on the terms of foreign capital, cannot redress the basic problems facing the Indian people. In the first place, such a policy became necessary because of the narrowness of the Indian domestic market. Unless this is expanded no long-term solution for India's economic prosperity can be ensured. Those who cite the examples of Japan and South Korea would do well to remember that neither of these two countries embarked upon the path of industrialization without undertaking radical land reforms.

The effects of these policies are there for everyone to see. Notwithstanding the rhetoric of a falling rate of inflation, the price of foodgrains during the last one year has gone up by 25%. Unemployment continues to soar with the threat of the exit policy looming large. Industrial production has declined. Exports show a sluggish growth, but imports outstrip this growth many times- over. This perpetuates the balance of payment deficit which, in turn, forces India to borrow more and more to safeguard this deficit.

In a nutshell, this economic strategy is thus one which, while increasing the burdens of the poor continues to push the country inexorably into a debt trap, mortgaging our economic sovereignty. For India to be self-reliant and develop the economic strength to resist imperialist pressures, it is necessary that it resolves the fundamental contradiction that keeps its domestic market narrow and its millions impoverished. It is only the left, particularly the CPI(M), that has such a vision of a future India.

To return to where we started: notwithstanding the protests about the irrelevance of socialism, the left in India is the only political force that offers a viable alternative to the multi-dimensional challenges that our country faces today. A patriotic coalition of all those who cherish the values that galvanized the Indian people for the struggle against British colonialism will have to be forged to deliver India from this crisis. The left is the catalyst in this process.

### Books

#### INDIA INVENTED - A Nation-in-The-Making by

Arvind N. Das. Manohar Publications, Delhi, 1992.

FOR Indians to reflect on India has in modern times been quite a frequent occurrence. Even in the rational secular mode one recalls within the last few decades, among others, K.S. Shelvankar, Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajni Palme Dutt. Catherine Mayo thought about us unsympathetically and critically and half a century later, David Selbourne was as critical even though sympathetic to the people of India. That the post-1947 generation has been impelled to undertake this exercise for themselves and for us all-only indicates that the times are as critical and challenging as they ever were, maybe more. We are called upon to look at ourselves and define or, at least, describe ourselves once again, to face the tasks of today. Achin Vanaik's Painful Transition did it very recently (1990) but appeared less questioning of who we are and more concerned with how we shall become what we may. Arvind Das is not only more questioning about who we are. He responds to the question: is there a 'we? Or are there many 'we's? And what shall we become?

Vanaik as well as Das have the advantage of more than half a century of scholarly work behind them, at least a quarter century of new social science and radical political economy to use, belong to a generation which has not known what being unfree is and, indeed, have the wider horizon of the whole world to contemplate. When, therefore, Das speaks of 'inventing' India, he is under no inhibition, as earlier generations were, that this is not so dissimilar to calling this country 'a mere geographical expression' as the colonialists were wont to.

He seeks to 'invent' India because perhaps it is a more viable entity than its parts could be to hold its own amidst techno-industrial power complexes which developed nations are. He is under no compulsion to legitimate the future he seeks by appeal to a past where 'it had always existed', as the early nationalists were. But as one who supports Das's vision of the India he would invent, the reviewer is still left wondering if those who would 'invent' an India premised on a brahmanic vedantic Hinduism could not make a case, perhaps not as strong theoretically but nevertheless not totally inadmissible and, unfortunately, in today's ethnicity oriented turn in the ideological-political Kondratiev cycle, much more

vocally supported for the moment by more articulate Indians who were born in Hindu families. And social scientists well recognize that the self-fulfilling prophecy is a fairly real phenomenon. As is the one of values turning into facts with organized effort.

And yet Das's is an attractive enterprise. It promises a world of rationality, equality and all the good things (social) which modern Indians could desire. If only the world were not such a restricted shrunken space in which the First World has already occupied it all—and seeks, not so unsuccessfully to dominate and exploit those not of it. Which makes the enterprise called India that much more difficult to succeed in. To build the economic bases on which to bind all India into one, to have the surpluses which make freedom and fair distribution that much more possible, to even possess the cultural and strategic infra- and/or superstructures with which to successfully face the world-the world-system constituted as it is now makes precisely these imperatives of building India so very difficult, if not impossible. Surely, Das is not unaware of this situation. But his book shows very little of such awareness. Except for references to NRIs, and the discussion of recent economic events, one could have imagined India existed by itself, unconstrained by a dominating and exploitative world system.

That is a caveat on grounds of feasibility. There is also one on grounds of desirability. Das's treatment of language is relatively oblivious of the dominant role of English which creates a new caste-like structure of Indian society and culture superimposed on the old. Of this, too, one is sure, he is fully aware. But the entire exercise does not even consider the possibility that this India of English and 14 other (officially recognized) languages—or 1400 other languages, if you like will be a united India of the English-speaking five, or (if we accept S. Gopal's more liberal estimate) 10% Indians. He has the illusion, which so many of my fellow users of Hindi like to entertain, that it is English and Hindi (p. 133) and 13 or 1300 other Indian languages which constitute the linguistic reality of India today. That may well be the reality in the becoming, though one has one's very serious doubts. For the moment, however, the linguistic phenomenon is characterised as much by the secession of the (English using) successful (Das's own phrase elsewhere) as in the sphere of economy and identity which Das notes so well.

While the earlier demurral from Das's position was mainly a statement of omission, a call for making

explicit what is implicit in his position, the present (English) language-related criticism is a serious questioning of the India he will invent. Can it be equal? Can it be democratic? Can it even be India, given that the English-speaking already have another foot in some other part of the world, literally as well as in economic and cultural terms and, therefore, in the long term, politically, too? Is India possible? And, if one is looking for an alternative given the history of the past couple of centuries and the closely knit character of the all-India English using upper crust, is it even possible that 15 Indias more equal and democratic internally—Tamil Nadu, Bengal, etcetera -will be allowed to emerge? Like so many radical intellectuals, Lohiaites (and Sanghis) apart, Das completely underplays and side-steps the language conundrum and its implications. The virility of most of the dozen-odd Indian languages and the significance of the English-non-English divide are much too real to be ignored. This he does, in effect.

These are the only serious criticisms one could make of his position and they are stated fully and first precisely because we have an extremely attractive and sophisticated statement of our condition. There is not much hesitancy about the direction we are to go. The rule of law, democracy, equity and secular institutions, these are basic to (his) India and to mine. These are not only desirable. Without them India cannot survive. The India of our invention cannot be built. Brahmanic or vedantic Hinduism would come in the way. An appeal to the past to summon up support for it (the latter) would be contrary to history. An attempt to promulgate it in future would be divisive. More generally, ethnicity itself, whose current meaning (abstracted from the original race-oriented connotation, now) spans tribe, religion, caste, language—and perhaps all that is not class or nation—interacting (Das's word is confrontation) with class and nation will in its outcome 'determine not only India of the future but also the rest of humanity' (p. 27).

In the tradition of Kosambi's seminal thought, Das views other categories essentially in terms of class and class relations in India. Only, he seeks to emphasize Edward Thompson's elaborate formulation: a social and cultural formation (often finding institutional expression) which can be defined .. in terms of relationship with other classes...in the medium of time i.e. action and reaction, change and conflict... a very loosely defined body of people who share the same congeries of interests, social experience, traditions and value systems...have a disposition to behave as a class, to define themselves in their actions and in their consciousness in relation to other groups in class ways...class itself is not a thing, it is a happening'. Das adds '...this happening is a process of self discovery and self recognition' (p. 33). It is this process not only with respect to class but with regard to India itself which he appears to have embarked upon.

It is in the ancient past that Kautilya gave to India the law-governed society as its model. Substi-

thtion of law with any Hindutva or vedantic myths. would not do. Rulers from Ashoka on, began to build an India—an early episode in the long story of development. In the colonial period one saw. 'three major phases of Hindu self-perception' viz. Ram Mohun's reassessment of Hindu tradition and attention to social reform, followed by reasserted Hindu values with a vedantic base, supposed to have been suppressed under Muslim rule. And then, in . the political context of Independence, revolving round the future of India, with both Gandhi and Nehru with their different visions objecting to the Hindu option—and the secular state winning outeven as Gandhian undercurrents of Ramrajya and the shifting of emphasis from pure vedanta to bhakti was different from Nehru's notion of composite culture. 'Under the surface of this Nehruvian current, there have been opposing currents. Separatism, regionalism, communalism, casteism are polemic descriptions of these. Behind them are two larger, movements...religious fundamentalism (and) regionalism. Hinduism today stands at this crossroad' (p.78).

In similar vein we have an examination of the concepts and categories of caste, tribe, region and of religion, culture and society. We are taken through the vicissitudes they have had in India's history and in the contemporary period. As one comes to his 'Inconclusive Conclusions' (ch. 9), one examines them once again for today and are then asked to contemplate, in the end, 'another Republic for India' (ch.10), pointers to the future are visible. Or, are they?

'Stable hopeful reconstructive Nehruvian democracy...1947 to 1962 as India's first republic... (followed by) a more uncertain but brash populist second republic...upto 1975... (and then) India's first Empire...hamstrung by India's social pluralities which could not be homogenised by political flat' (p. 161).

Then came the dissolution of the Empire and in 1977 the Third Republic characterized by a consolidation of subaltern classes. International and domestic political contexts did not permit this for long and a second imperium started with the Asian games of 1982 characterized by absolutist tendencies and the rise of the consumerist class. 'However, the pluralities of India are too many to allow for the consolidation and perpetuation of an absolutist regime in modern times. Castes, classes, religions, institutions, factions, lobbies—all coexist' (p. 162). Today's uncertain republic was thus born in 1987 and we live in it now.

In this context the implausibility or impracticality of a *Hindutva*-dominated situation on account of the resistance to it not only of non-Hindus but also the non-brahmanic and regional components is spelt out once again. The new phenomenon of the NRI-yuppie leading the well off 200 million whose 'eyes are oriented towards the consumerist societies of the West but...(whose) feet are tied to the deadweight of the poverty and scarcity ridden economy' of another 500 million for whom time has stood

still (p. 189) is only one of the many characteric of the current situation to which attention is attracted. '...designer capitalism and designer populism' flourish. But politics for the rest, the bulk of society cannot do with this...both material production and the ideology of equity still have an important role to play' (p.190). And so on.

'Given all these factors... there are very few alternatives for India. It can either disintegrate like the erstwhile Soviet Union or it can go through a situation like the United States which is marked by a 'secession of the successful from the public order' (p. 193) in which one sees the emergence of a new caste system with utter social separation where the fax, the selective expensive school etcetera make, for instance, the general postal and educational systems irrelevant. As if the fragmentation of the Indian people on the basis of religion and ritualism was not enough, now the nation is being torn asunder on a political-economic basis, too' (p. 194). It is to counter prospects like these that the perspectives of equity and democracy, rule of law and secular institutions have to be built. Material production and the ideology of equity mentioned above and the implicitly, somewhat less prominently noted struggles of the subaltern classes which mark the pursuit of either would help achieve this.

Such an unsatisfactory summary of some of the facets of this many-sided work can only provide a flavour of the book—one which is absorbing as you read it but not so easy to summarize or review.

Bombay produced two important leaders of Indian sociology: Srinivas who is repeatedly saying 'I told you so' as he plugs the caste-Sanskritization model of Indian change and A.R. Desai whose stark statements of the class dimensions of Indian reality would take a lot of battering but nevertheless persist. Das may be nearer Akshaybhai but draws on a much more complex skein of concepts and their trajectory(ies) through our history to develop a perspective for our future—still open and to be worked and struggled for. Surely that perspective is still developing. Arvind Das can equally surely be expected to clarify it much more over the years to come.

S. Shukla

LAMENT FOR A NATION: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism by George Grant. Carleton University Press, Ottawa, 1986. First published in 1965; new 'Introduction' added in 1975.

READING George Grant's Lament for a Nation (1965, hereafter the Lament) has been a memorable experience. This may be for two reasons. For one thing, the state of the Indian nation today appears to share in some ways the lamentable destiny of the Canadian nation. The Lament is meant to be an alarmist conservative political elegy on the throes

of the passing away of Canada as a sovereign nation and its integration into North American continental capitalism dominated by the technological republic south of the 49th parallel. The problem of Quebec's separatism does not loom large in Grant's Lament, partly because it had not hotted up yet. And over the years, through reconciliatory political and economic policies, Canadian nationalism won over Quebecoi separatism.

But Indian nationalists today are party to a double lament: the uncertain future awaiting India's growing integration into the world capitalist system and the spectre of disintegration as a nation on account of mounting separatism in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Assam, and terrorism all around. As if all this were not enough, 'Mandalization' at the beginning of the 1990s produced festering wounds in the multi-cellular caste society in the form of 'reservation' conflicts, and struck at the roots of the merit-based bureaucracy and equitable public employment.

Another reason why reading the Lament has been an interesting experience is that Grant has perfected a style of writing that blends social science and literature, philosophy and politics, ethics and theology. A'sharp and reflective mind coupled with a multi-disciplinary perspective has produced a densely textured and deeply moving philosophical medita-tion on the predicaments of the Canadian nation in the post-war world. Although at first sight it appears to be a document fixed in a particular time and place, it is actually a treatise on the universal predicaments of humanity at the turn of the century. These universal concerns converge on vexing questions about the appropriate relationships between freedom and domination, culture and technology, morality and politics. Its one shortcoming, in my view, is that except for a brief sentence at the end, it appears devoid of any moral and ethical hope over and above the deep gorge of historicist logic of impersonal/objective structures that it excels in depicting.

It opens with a dramatis personae: John G. Diefenbaker, the Tory Prime Minister of Canada (1957-1963) whose term of office ran partly concomitantly with the Kennedy presidency in the United States. Incidentally, the young President and the aged PM both suffered a tragic fate. The tragedy of the former was his assassination. John Diefenbaker became the Canadian PM in 1957 after a long spell of Liberal rule since 1935. He was reelected in a snap election in 1958, sweeping the country with 208 seats out of 265. By the 1962 elections the popularity of his party had eroded, though Diefenbaker continued in office with the support of the Social Credit Party until 1963, when another snap election decisively routed the Tories.

Grant depicts Diefenbaker as being under seige both at home and abroad and as finally being hounded out of office. Grant writes that when Diefenbaker's government was voted out, New Democratic

Party socialists joined hands with Liberal MPs representing Toronto and Montreal business (pp.1-2). The high-brow circles in the academia and the world of journalism alike heaped the juciest jokes and most venomous abuses on Diefenbaker. The American displeasure with the Diefenbaker government came to the surface during the defence crisis of 1962-63 and the Cuban crisis around the same time. The issues at stake were Diefenbaker's reluctance to accept nuclear warheads in Canada and his implied criticism of the American policy regarding Cuban missiles by demanding a UN investigation of the case in Cuba.

The Lament began as an attempt to explain 'why Diefenbaker raised the concentrated wrath of the established classes' and 'why his actions turned the ruling class into a pack howling for his blood' (p. 2). The first three chapters of the book are mainly preoccupied with the tragic destiny of Diefenbaker as a political leader, while the remaining chapters deal with the agonies suffered by Canada as a nation. Grant sees the two tragic destinies as interlinked: 'His inability to govern is linked with the inability of this country to be sovereign' (p. 4).

The mainspring of the *Lament* is Canadian conservatism and its twin English Canadian nationalism. To quote Grant:

I have implied that the existence of a sovereign Canada served the good. But can the disappearance of an unimportant nation be worthy of serious grief? For some older Canadians it can. Our country is the only political entity to which we have been trained to pay allegiance. Growing up in Ontario, the generation of the 1920s took it for granted that they belonged to a nation. The character of the nation was self-evident. To say it was British was not to deny it was North American. To be a Canadian was to be a unique species of North American.... We were grounded in the wisdom of Sir John A. Macdonald, who saw plainly more than a hundred years ago that the only threat to nationalism was from the South, not from across the sea. To be a Canadian was to build, along with the French, a more ordered and stable society than the liberal experiment in the United States (pp. 3-4).

John Diefenbaker stood literally by this vision of Canadian nationalism. But within a few years of winning the largest majority in our history, Diefenbaker's government was defeated, and a new copy of the old regime was back in power' (p. 11). Yet Grant sees something heroic about the man, even though he does not hesitate to expose Diefenbaker's naive populism and his Quixotic fight for the lost cause of Canadian nationalism against North American continentalism and the technological empire of the Republic to the south. For him the hero and anti-hero merge into one. There is a queer admixture of the Brechtian typology of dramatic theatre versus the epic theatre about the Lament; the polarities of plot and narrative, suggestion and argu-

ment, growth and montage, linear development and jumps, man as a fixed point and man as a process, feeling and reason, are all fused and interwoven into the story. Diefenbaker emerges as hero and victim at the same time. One might perhaps say the same for Grant.

Grant's meditation on the fate of Canadian nationalism in the post-war world has all the enchantment that nationalism is known to exercise on the mind of man. But it simultaneously indulges in a rational, dispassionate exposition of the objective forces of the North American continentalism that permeates the Canadian economy, society, and polity. One by one, Grant turns to the classes, ethnic groups, and regions that may like to radicalize or moderate nationalism and diagnoses why it may be losing to continentalism. He shows this consequence to be the logical outcome of both the structure of social change taking place in Canada and the culture of progress to which the Canadians as a nation are wedded.

It is probably this self-image of Grant as a philosopher and social scientist that accounts for the fact why one does not find in the Lament the kind of courageous moral indictment of modern technological civilization that is present in Gandhi's Hind Swaraj (1939), at least in the same measure. Nor does one find in Grant Nehru's guarded glee at his discovering the Indian nation via the West in his Discovery of India (1946). Nor is there anything like Jayaprakash Narayan's bold pleas for a reconstruction of the Indian polity from the bottom up in his Swaraj for the People (1961).

Central to Grant's Lament is an incisive analysis of the forces of change that made Canadian nationalism lose to North American continentalism. Internationally, the villain of the piece was the gradual decline of the United Kingdom and the concomitant rise of the USA as a superpower. At home, the business and industrial classes in central Canada lost their early Canadianism under the internationalizing impact of rising Canadian capitalism. In the words of Grant: 'During the Howe era, this older Canadianism disappeared first in Toronto and Montreal, cities that once prided themselves on being most British' (p.33).

But Canadian nationalism 'still survived in the less modern parts of Canada' (p. 33). This probably refers to western Canada that joined the confederation much later, and Catholic French Canada, one of the founding 'races' of the confederation in 1867. Diefenbaker was the product mainly of the western prairie populism. And the formidable forces he found himself up against were, in Grant's analysis, the Canadian power elite consisting of the Liberal Party establishment, the senior civil service, and the corporate business and industrial sector—all subservient to the American economic hegemony.

In Grant's perception the only viable strategies of Canadian nationalism could have been a combination

of the policies followed by de Gaulle in France and Fidel Castro in Cuba. The Enlightenment ideology of progress, the structure of long-term economic change in Canada and Europe, and the geopolitical juxtaposition of Canada with the most advanced nation of the world are the major explanations offered by Grant for the failure of these strategies in Canada. Implicit in the Lament is a two-level structure of transition to continentalism: the brahmic/phenomenal/structural/industrial/metropolitan; and the mayaic/epiphenomenal/superstructural/pastoral/peripheral/mimical. In the long run, this duality is supposed to be unreal and transitory.

All this may appear to be impeccably historicist, particularly in view of the fact that in the late 1980s it was Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservative Party under Prime Minister Brian Mulrony, a Quebec-born English Canadian, that was destined to lead Canada into the Free Trade Agreement with the United States. But there was an irony, too, in seeing the Liberal Shadow PM John Turner howling down Mulrony in a TV debate during the 1988 electoral campaign: 'You sold us out on free trade!'

However, despite its animated defence of Canadianism, the Lament suffers from some serious limitations as a charter of Canadian nationalism. It is at the most a testament of the older British Canadianism, a historical victim of the geographical, demographic and economic expansion of Canada. This explains Grant's ambivalence towards prairie populism and French Canadian nationalism. He fails to either comprehend them or fully identify with them, and may well be why he occasionally abandons the mask of identification with the prairie populist Diefenbaker.

It would also explain the paradox why the Lament is generally correct about the long-term trend of change in Canada but fails to anticipate the patterns of change in western Canada and Quebec which took place just decades following its writing. Thus he visualized the developments in post-1960 Quebec that came to be called the Quiet Revolution leading to the emergence of a vibrant new urban French Canadian middle class but did not anticipate Quebec's separatism. Similarly, he did not anticipate the vigorous assertion of western Canadian regionalism demanding a federalization of the Canadian Parliament by Senate reforms, i.e., an elected Senate giving equal representation to all states, big and small, and enjoying veto over the House of Commons on federal matters.

Ironically, even where the bleak prophecies of the Lament came true symbolically in the momentous Free Trade Agreement with the US, they do not appear to be as bleak today as they did to Grant. The electoral mandate and procedural consensus with which the free trade came to pass may be taken as an index of some positive economic consequence for Canada flowing from it. By the same token, one may take it that it is not such a great threat to Canadian

sovereignty. Grant himself had implied in the 1965 text of the *Lament* that the Canadian dependency was not as bad as that of Latin America. And in a new Introduction added in 1975, Grant was more explicit on this point, though his typical moral sting was not to desert him:

We are not in that empire as are the exploited colonies of South America, but rather with the intimacy of a younger brother status. We have all the advantages of that empire, the wealth which pours in from all over the world, the technology which comes to us through the multinational corporations. Yet, because we have formal political independence, we can keep out of the dirty work necessary to that empire. We make money from Vietnam; but we do not have to send our sons there. We are like the child of some stockbroker who can enjoy the fruits of his father's endeavours by living the swinging life, but likes to exclude from his mind where the money came from (p. IX).

There was also present the basic historicist question:

Lying behind the immediate decisions arising from our status within the empire is the deeper question of the fate of any particularity in the technological age. What happens to nationalist strivings when the societies in question are given over, at the very level of faith, to the realization of the technological dream? At the core of that faith is service to the process of universalization and homogenization. The one best means' must after all be the same in Chicago, Hamilton, and Dusseldorf (p. IX).

And the marginal evangelist of the Lament ('Whatever the difficulty of philosophy, the religious man has been told that process is not all', p. 97) seems to be replaced by the philosopher or the moralist:

We live in an era when most our public men are held by ignoble delusions—generally a mixture of technological progressivism and personal self-assertion—all that is left of official liberalism in the English-speaking world. In such circumstances a writer has greater responsibility to ridicule the widespread ignoble delusions than to protect the few remaining beliefs which might result in nobility (p. XI).

An Indian reading the Lament cannot but reflect on the fate of his own nation today. India as a nation has been much less fortunate than Canada in its historical legacies of authoritarianism and partition on the very eve of its independence and in the continuing burdens of social backwardness, poverty and cumulative inequalities. Yet India has been struggling to achieve economic development and justice through democratic means. The failure of the import substituting strategy of self-reliant growth and industrialization under a mixed economy with a dominant state sector has, over the last decade, forc-

ed India to open up to domestic and international economic competition and globalization.

The collapse of the communist system in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has put a big question mark on the relevance of Indian policy of non-alignment that was a product of the post-war bipolar world and its strategy of diversification of trade relations and defence supplies. Suddenly, the conventional ways of dealing with the external environment would not do. The decomposition of the democratic processes, the rise of ethnic and class militancy, and the spreading dragnet of consumerist miasma are some additional features of the overall scenario. All these do not add up to a reassuring prospect for either the Indian state or the nation, or the quality of life in the country, for that matter.

Returning for a moment to George Grant's Lament, one notices a striking resemblance between his 'celebration' of the memory (p. 4) of British English Canadian nationalism and the recent incarnation of aggressive Hindutva championed by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bharatiya Janata Party in India. Both pride a 'pure' nationalism but each actually amounts to a particularism which is less than fully sensitive to the broader Canadian and Indian nationalism.

Canadian nationalism today subsumes English speakers of British and non-British extraction and the French Canadians not only in Quebec but all across Canada. Likewise, the revivalist Hinduism in India today strikes at the roots of composite Indian nationalism, which by history and geography must necessarily be multi-religious and multi-ethnic. Hindu communalists today may be unwittingly falling for the same imperial-colonial trap that the Muslim League fell into under the British rule. The same is true of Sikh, Muslim, and Assamese fundamentalists and separatists in the northwest and northeast in India today.

However, the current pessimism is partly a result of the lack of full vision about the changing contours of international and geopolitical scenarios and the growing integration of the South Asian region into the world capitalist system with a greater potentiality than ever before on an egalitarian mode of exchange. The serious domestic economic decline in both the USA and the Soviet Union for at least a decade or more and the precipitous end of the cold war in the late 1980s may well portend South Asia's coming into its own for the first time since the end of the British Raj.

But that is contingent on a strong sense of regional identity and cooperation in South Asia—something akin to the vision of the arch of unity that Babur as the prince of Farghana visualized and subsequently only partly realized. And that will require a level of internal political reconciliation and removal of disparities and disaffection within the countries of the region and external management of diplomatic confidence-building that has eluded the South Asian region so far.

Are we equal to the challenge? A modest beginning has been made with the formation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in 1985 at the initiative of Bangladesh. The seven membernations of SAARC need in their common interest to expand and deepen the areas of cooperation among them in the cultural, economic, political and diplomatic fields. The global powers; too, would do well to help SAARC to come to terms with the regional realities in the interest of peace and stability in this region and the world at large.

M.P. Singh

#### CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN SOUTH ASIA:

Pakistan, Bangladesh and India by Veena Kukreja. Sage Publications, Delhi, 1991.

IN the preface to her book, Civil-Military Relations in South Asia, Veena Kukreja declares: The present study describes and explains the patterns of civil-military relations in South Asia set within a comprehensive theoretical framework, utilising existing theories and hypotheses'. Kukreja's book is different in that it encompasses multiple case studies, i.e. covering a region locked together by an overwhelming passion of/and/for, history, as well as a perennial pursuit of conflict. South Asia is perplexing by any normal yardstick; to attempt what Kukreja has, is riveting.

The inspiration to write this book clearly owes to the sizeable chasms that exist in works already published. Kukreja attempts to fill the gaps, by comparing three cases, as well as undertaking a multidisciplinary approach. The result is interesting, even absorbing, at times, but it certainly cannot be considered the last word on the subject.

Large portions of the book are essentially political essays, assailing this or praising that. The politics is, surprisingly, simplistic: 'In the political stability that he (Nehru) provided to the nation, the seeds sprouted and the plant grew from strength to strength.' 'Jinnah, who has been wrongly publicised as a brilliant founder of a state, failed as an institution builder.' That Indians are yet not capable of a dispassionate and scientific analysis of Jinnah is most evident in this sweeping declaration by Kukreja. The Nehru fixation, similarly, is even more surprising, given that India is far from the 'island of orderly development and stable democracy' Kukreja declares it to be. The continued reliance on Nehru as architect, contractor, and also the 'man of the house', as far as India is concerned, smacks of naivete.

Post-independent India was the construct of a conscious attempt at striking a break with the past. This required the systematic downgrading of a class of Indians in possession of social power. The development of India's polity toward the Congress vision

of things could not be attempted without the departure of this class. That they were amply represented in the military is fundamental to this tale. And that the Indian bureaucracy was a partner in this exertion is also deliberate. The civil-military relationship in independent India is built upon a confluence of interests of the ruling political and bureaucratic classes. It is the premeditated 'brahminisation' of India that created civil supremacy. By the time of the 'jai jawan, jai kisan' slogans, the relationship was sufficiently ensconsed.

In Pakistan, on the other hand, political development of any kind was only possible after the coup of 1958. Pakistan inherited armed forces that were largely Punjabi, a bureaucracy primarily drawn from the Ganges belt, in a geographical setting that had little to do with the Pakistan movement. The struggle between these various forces only began to get sorted out by the end of the 1950s. Since then the military has been the dominant force, as Punjab is suitably prevailing over the rest of Pakistan. Kukreja believes the main cause is 'Pakistan's preference for military build-up by de-emphasising economic development'. Pakistani strides in agricultural development are impressive, to say the least. It was again intentional, since the major beneficiaries would be the Punjabi gentry, and kulaks. That they also happen to be the dominant class within the Army is not incidental. Kukreja does not give ample attention to the basic inter-play of classes; consequently, the appearance is rather polemical. There is also no analysis of developments within the three militaries.

An army, after all, will reflect the quality and character of its training. That the Indian military has refrained from wielding political power, as opposed to political participation, has as much, if not more, to do with the kind of training imparted to the young boys who subsequently become officers. Over the years, Indian officers have been sent to various Western and Eastern countries for courses, the professional effect of which must be substantial. Kukreja's belief in military coup as a holy mission (p. 207) is simply surprising. Islam entered Zia's imagination much after he had usurped power, and those Arab governments based on military rule are certainly not inclined towards forces of Islamic consciousness. Bangladesh, the case which is treated with far greater professionalism than the others, is possibly the most interesting section in this book. The assertion that the Bangladesh Army is disunited and heterogeneous, however, is difficult to digest, for that is precisely the nature of the Indian Army. Similarly, the declaration 'Ziaur Rahman's BNP had no grass-roots base' is inexplicable. In that case, Begum Khalida Zia could not have been elected. Expressions like 'one of her buddies' are strange in a book of this kind, particularly when the attention of students and scholars is of primary concern. But the fact that this book appeared is itself creditworthy, and will no doubt be of interest to many.

Manvendra Singh

INDIA'S MIXED ECONOMY: The Role of Ideology and Interest in Its Development by Baldev Raj Nayar. Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1989.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF INDIA'S

PUBLIC SECTOR: Policy and Performance by

Baldev Raj Nayar. Popular Prakashan, Bombay,

1990.

NEVER before in the post-Independence era in India has the debate on the mixed economy or the role of the public sector been as contentious as it is now. India at present has a substantial public sector, with the share of this sector in national income having gone up from about 11% in the early 1960s to well over a quarter. The public sector has a dominant presence in core industries such as steel, coal, aluminium and infrastructural activities such as transport, communications and power. Thus the rationale as well as the performance of the Indian public sector is a matter of substantial interest as it virtually affects all major economic activities in the country.

In *India's Mixed Economy*, Baldev Raj Nayar addresses himself to the role of ideology and interest in the evolution of India's public sector. He adopts an agnostic posture while examining contending ideologies regarding the public sector and its relationship with the process of development and the nature of the state. He reviews the role of ideology in the nationalist movement and, in particular, elaborates on Nehru's model of socialism. The contrasting approaches of the Indian business community as well as the ideological postures of the Indian communist parties are also examined in some detail.

The author's essential thesis is that the rationale of the public sector in developing countries is related to consummatory (ideological) and/or instrumental (interest) factors. The consummatory element pertains to something being desirable for its own sake, such as the ideology of socialism in the minds of Fabians. In contrast, the instrumental factor has to do with the contingent advantage that the public sector is supposed to provide in the process of development. Nayar is of the view that 'the fundamental impulses in the establishment of the public sector were ideological' (p. 292). He contends that Nehru's ideology had as its ultimate goal the ushering in of a socialist society, rather than any hidden agenda to advance capitalism, and this he set out to do via the route of 'mixed economy'. Nehru's goal could not be achieved, he feels, because of the perceived failure of the performance of the public sector. His overall conclusion is that the political acceptability of the public sector is ultimately dependent on its performance.

There is fairly detailed coverage of the thinking on economic matters in the pre-Independence era, in particular of the development of Nehru's socialist vision. Nehru believed that socialism would have to be adapted to Indian conditions. He had once advised his socialist colleagues to speak of socialism in the language of India, the language which grows

from a complex of associations of past history and culture and present environment'. In 1938 the National Planning Committee was formed under the chairmanship of Nehru, and this 'provided a forum to formulate a socialist blueprint specifically suited to India. The committee consisted of a diverse group of people, and in Nehru's words, 'hardheaded big business was there as well as people who are called idealists and doctrinaires and socialists and neocommunists'. The work of the committee was never completed owing to the resignation of the Congress ministries in 1939 and the imprisonment of Nehru the following year. Yet it was as a result of the deliberations of this committee that the notion of the mixed economy in the Indian context was given concrete shape.

Considerable attention is given to the notion of the intermediate regime, first talked of by the late Polish economist Michal Kalecki, which refers to the ruling class comprising of the urban middle classes and the rural rich and middle peasantry. Several other writers have identified the intermediate regime with the small-scale bourgeoisie, including traders, merchants, professionals and the owner-proprietors of closely held companies who are not accountable to any shareholders.

Nayar examines the thesis that the rise of the intermediate class in India after the mid-1960s led to her economic stagnation, but concludes that the thesis is overstretched. The problem with this notion, according to the author, is that the interests of the intermediate strata were not necessarily identified with any particular framework for the organization of the economy. While some sections of the strata favoured a socialist framework or what he calls a 'socialist instrumental mixed economy', there were others that were inclined towards a private ownership capitalist economy. The author concludes therefore that no tendency towards socialism or state capitalism necessarily entailed from the fact that an intermediate class controlled the levers of state power.

Nayar carefully adumbrates the ascendancy of the socialist ideology during the 1955 Congress session at Avadi and its incorporation both in the formulation of the Second Five Year Plan as well as in the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956. Nehruvian socialism was impeded by the pursuit of a variety of group interests, and in particular by the capitalist sector on the one hand, and the phenomenon of rent seeking by the bureaucracy and the trading class on the other. The serious economic crisis of the mid-1960s created the basis for a transition to radicalism. Subsequently, during 1969-1973, in the aftermath of the nationalization of banks, ideology once again reigned supreme. The decade after the Emergency, according to the author, is marked by a retreat from radicalism, and that is the point up to which the book runs.

The Political Economy of India's Public Sector is devoted essentially to an examination of the performance of the public sector in India. There are two case studies of the steel and aluminium indus-

tries in which both the public as well as the private sectors coexist, and a comparison is made of their performances. At the very outset it is emphasized that in a developing country the role of the public sector is to fulfil multiple economic and non-economic goals, amongst which capital accumulation has a central place. In terms of this last objective, Nayar's finding is that the public sector has been a 'massive failure' (p. 290), a conclusion that is by no means startling. The public sector steel units, for example, have shown large financial losses over long periods of time, both in absolute terms as also in relation to the private sector. The financial losses have had to be met by budgetary support. This has contributed to an escalating public debt.

The author disputes the thesis that the losses of the public sector are the result of the objective of the state to subsidize the private sector through the provision of cheap inputs. He also argues that the large losses cannot be explained away by any appeal to social obligations in respect of the economy, society and polity; for he feels that the performance of the private sector in respect of objectives like technological self-reliance, economic autonomy, role as model employer and backward area development, is at least as good, if not better. While this assertion may hold good for TISCO in the steel sector, one cannot agree with the author on the general validity of the proposition.

Reviewing the performance of the public sector in steel and aluminium, Nayar asks whether this sector has the capacity to perform the functions of entrepreneurship effectively, and comes up with a negative answer. He argues that because of inherently superior monitoring and policing mechanisms, the private sector will outperform the public sector. He makes a case for allowing the private sector more freedom to expand, while emphasizing the necessity of a strong state in developing countries.

Today, more than ever before, there is awareness amongst economists, and social scientists generally, about the possibility of both market and government failures, or the shortcomings of both the private and public sectors. To argue for the universal superiority of the private sector would be too naive and simplistic. In a poor country there is still substantial scope for public action in economic and social infrastructure. From the point of view of rights, the government has to be active in education and health. From the point of view of protection against hunger and malnutrition, the government has to engage in poverty alleviation programmes. These are areas where the private sector simply cannot intervene effectively, if it can intervene at all.

Both these volumes bear the marks of considerable painstaking research. The issues are addressed on a wide canvas, and rival points of view are examined with considerable care. For anyone working on the Indian mixed economy or the public sector, they should prove to be valuable reference material.

P. B. Nayak

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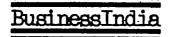
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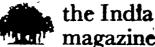
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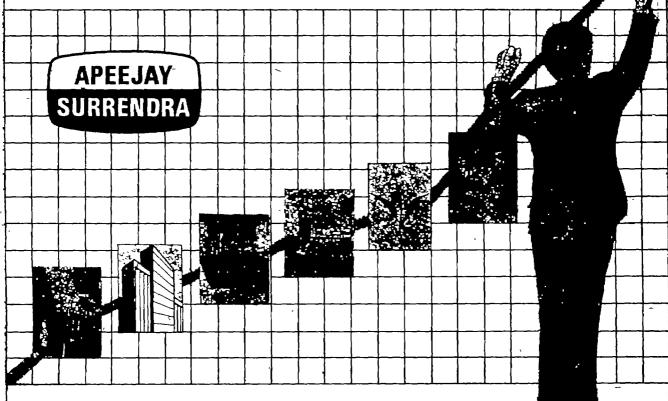
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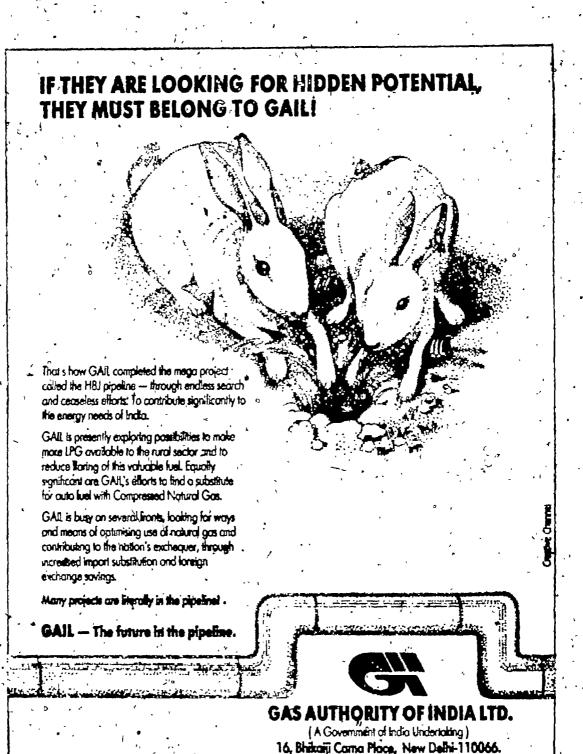
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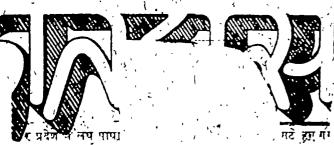
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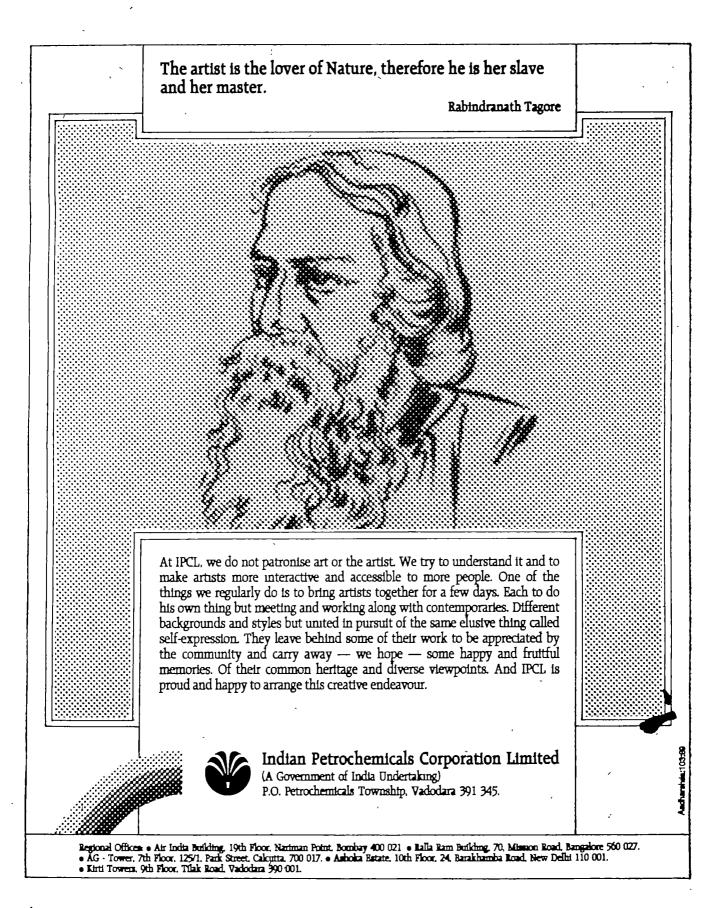
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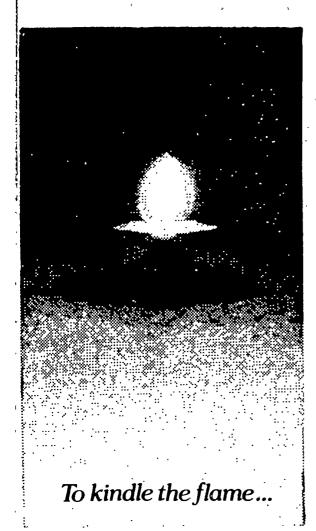
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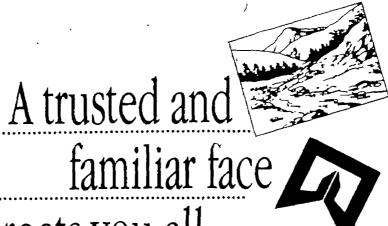
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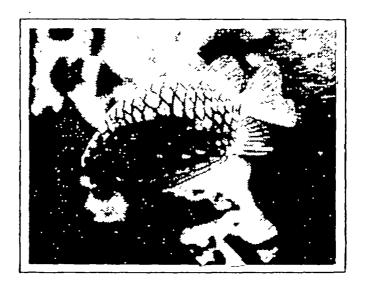
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# The problem

TELLING children about the past is an exercise full of problems. First of all, it is difficult to determine the 'truth' about the past, for what happened in the past can be viewed or remembered differently depending on the perspective from which it is seen. The 'truth' about the past is also shaped by what it means to us now, and this cannot be labelled as a problem of interpretation: it includes the problem of choosing what is important, and therefore worth telling, and what is not. Historians like to be objective, but find it harder than other social scientists.

To the common problem of being influenced by one's point of view, history-writing adds the problem that we tend to look at the past from the present moment backwards. When we start looking at the past, we soon begin—almost without knowing it—to look for answers to problems that are bothering us in the present. This impulse can become so strong that we start looking for things in the past that match the answers we wish we could give to our present-day questions. This is how bias' enters into history-writing, and it usually leads us to tell half-truths, or rather tailor-made truths, about the past.

The task is problematic enough for individual historians; it becomes highly problematic when teams of historians are asked by a state to prepare history textbooks for schools. Under a party system, govern-

ments invariably represent a party ideology, hopefully balanced by the checks inbuilt in the political process. Like all other aspects of education, talking about the past too becomes a political act— not just in a philosophical sense, but in the narrow sense of party line. What happens, then, to the aims of education that relate to the nurturing of an open mind and the ability to appreciate divergent viewpoints?

Tensions between such aims of education and the party system have surfaced in the context of the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) move to introduce new history books in the states ruled by it. This is not the first time that a party in power has decided to shape the history syllabus in accordance with its perspective. Indeed, the BIP has been arguing for several years that school textbooks, especially the history textbooks, present the Congress party's perspective. In the specific context of the history texts published by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), the BJP and some organizations close to it have held the view that these texts present the biased perceptions of leftist historians. Those representing the BIP's point of view in the Janata regime between 1977, and 1980 (the BJP did not exist then by its present name) had mooted a major controversy concerning the NCERT texts by asking the Prime Minister to ban them.

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An important aspect of the controversy that has arisen today has to do with BJP's political ideology. Representation of the past matters more to the BJP than to any other political party. Along with economic and social problems which other parties use as well, the BJP uses the past as a political tool in its public exhortations and struggle. It is not fortuitous that the campaign which boosted pro-BJP votes in the last elections so dramatically had to do with a problem concerning history. The party's success in mobilizing vast numbers of people to take sides in the Ayodhya controversy is a remarkable example of the use of history in modern politics.

In the context of the school curriculum, the U.P. and M.P. governments' move to have history re-written and to introduce Vedic mathematics is charged with political intent for another reason: the BJP professes a model of India's past as a basis for future action. The party's view of what happened in ancient and medieval India is the very stuff which shapes its present-day outlook—or so it is claimed. What socioeconomic interests the party stands for get camouflaged by the vision of history that it upholds and the implications this view has for the present. This characteristic of the BJP's platform makes its appeal uniquely simple and 'unpolitical'. Many highly educated professional middle class people end up

feeling: 'Here at last is a party that has no axe to grindl'. The cutting edge of BJP's rapid political success in recent years is precisely this kind of intuitive 'sense' which it is able to make to the middle class. It readily translates into the popular belief that the BJP is needed to push India towards fulfilling its glorious destiny.

To those already willing to share the BIP's 'sense', revision of history textbooks and introduction of Vedic mathematics appear as appreciable steps towards reforming the system of education and the cultural repertoire of the educated. For others, these steps have sinister portent. They see these steps as part of the Hindu revivalist's political course which has led to a substantial increase in communal dislarmony over the recent years. Quite a few opponents of the BIP, who continue to stand by Nehru's vision of a secular Indian state, feel that the U.P. and M.P. governments' attempt to rewrite history is yet another proof of the fascist character of the BJP. The fact remains that even these critics do not know how to match BJP's popular appeal or to counter its specific curricular move. If nothing else, then the sense of hopelessness prevalent among secular-minded people warrants a close examination of the U.P. and M.P. governments' move in the wider context of the role of education in our society.

## Education and social change

RAVINDER KUMAR

AS we move in the 1990s into a new phase of our existence as a nation-state seeking modernity, the role of education in our society, and the relationship between education and ideology, have become issues of seminal significance. For education will inevitably play a crucial role in the transformation of our society: whether it relates to the generation of material values; or it concerns questions of political order and social cohesion; or it impinges upon issues which shape the identity of the individual and the collective, and locates them in worlds both sacred and profane.

In view of the crucial role of education in shaping Indian society, it is necessary to reflect upon various facets of the learning process, as they impinge upon society collectivey, no less than as they impinge upon the individual. Should education be treated as an instrument for the realization of certain objectives or is it a value in itself? What are the social functions of education as distinct from the moral poise and the self-comprehension which it confers upon the individual? How does education shape values at the same time as it is moulded by the social milieu in which it is located? How central-in view of current controversies over history textbooks—is a sense of the past and a consciousness

of identity in the life of the citizen and the destiny of political society? How does education—to the extent it is concerned with culture and identity—face up to the reality of social conflict and differing or even conflicting visions of the future within a community? Finally, how can we justify the choice of one ideology or set of values over others, as the basis of a system of education? These are some of the issues upon which I propose to dwell briefly in what follows.

I

If we examine the place occupied by education within a society, then it soon becomes clear that there are two sorts of roles which it is called upon to play in shaping a poised, liberal and creative community. In the first instance, education provides those skills and technologies which undergird material production and enable an individual to sustain himself. Over and above this economic resides the cultural role of education. Every human community, large or small, rests upon a corpus of values, traditions and shared memories which sustain its members, in their individual capacity as well as in their membership of the collective. The reproduction of these values and traditions in successive generations is a basic function of education, both in its formal and its informal manifestations.

This is not to suggest that education transmits values and promotes the socialization of the young in a passive manner. As the social environment changes with time, a measure of cultural adaptation is necessary for the health of the community. For this reason, besides reproducing certain traditions and values, a system of education is also required to instill the notion of curiosity and the capacity for innovation in the minds of the young. The learning of such skills equips the young to critically explore their heritage in a fashion which marries tradition to modernity in an admirable manner.

A system of education that can designated 'liberal' sustains appropriate social transformation not only because of changes in the social milieu and the external environment. The interplay of ideas and creativity worldviews—and the which stems from such an interplay is a liberal value in itself. For this reason, any worthwhile system of education encourages young minds of potential to examine conventional wisdom and inherited values in the belief that such critical examination is likely to yield beneficial results. Thus the generation of new values is not to be looked upon as something which necessarily flows out of changing social conditions. It can be (and often is) the result of the self-reflexive capacity of the human psyche, and its constant endeavour to enlarge and enrich the social and the aesthetic experience of humankind.

If I have conveyed the impression that education is merely an instrument for the fashioning and transmission of social values, then nothing would be further from my intention. For above everything else, a rounded system of education, which incorporates both formal and informal learning, is an integral part of the very act of social existence. It stimulates the capacity of the individual to reflect upon various issues: on the purpose of human existence; and on metaphysical problems relating to good and to evil; which are above and beyond mundane and material questions. Indeed, the distinction between the instrumental and the existential is in reality a tenuous distinction; and it is spelt out in the present context, merely to emphasize that education is as much concerned with material production and social order as it is concerned with cultural enrichment and spiritual understanding.

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I have cast the first section of this brief essay in the language of social theory, because such an exercise enables me to dwell upon some of the issues which are haunting Indian society in our times. Moreover, such issues bear a crucial relationship to our system of education and the values which inform the learning process and shape the thought of the intelligentsia.

At the outset, it would be timely to emphasize that every system of education rests upon certain values and assumptions which inform its substantive content as well as its formal structure. The character and visibility of these values and assumptions may vary from one context to another, for reasons which are not very difficult to locate. In 'a poised society, which has achieved a measure of social integration, and is able to relate change to continuity in an orderly fashion, the level of social awareness of underpinning values is not of a very high order. This is because there is a measure of consensus on how the young are to be nurtured and what are the ideals that should be held out before them. In a rapidly changing society characterized by anomic conditions, however, there is often a substantial measure of ideological conflict. In such a situation there is quite often serious debate on two issues: should values feature in education at all? And if they do, which set of values should be preferred over others, and why?

It is obvious even to a casual observer that Indian society is in a state of very rapid transition. This transition relates to a number of features: to the production of material wealth; to the organization of social communities and political order; and last but not the least, to the generation of societal ideals and moral values. All

this calls for very substantial changes in our system of education, as it pertains to the generation and transmission of scientific skills as well as to the dissemination of culture.

Lt is apparent to the critic of the contemporary scene in India that a number of conflicting ideologies are at work within the social matrix. Each one of these ideologies has a distinctive vision of the 'good society'; and, therefore, seeks to construct a different future for India. Advocates of the liberal worldview look forward to a community shaped by the privatization of wealth and the market; a polity characterized by popular democracy; and a plurality of cultures interwined into a composite civilization. Others—who seek to reshape a mythical past in the mould of a monolith—are prepared to accept liberal political institutions and market interplay in the economy at the same time as they reject the notion of cultural pluralism. Those committed to Marxist values, needless to say, dismiss the rationality of the market as the great flywheel of material production at the same time as they welcome the notion of a plural yet cohesive social and cultural order. Finally, there exists a powerful neo-Gandhian voice, which seeks to challenge the market system as the basis of the political economy at the same time as it focuses attention on the desperate plight of those underclasses—the 'wretched of the (Indian) earth'—whose labour sustains the privileged orders of society in relative case and luxury.

If we accept the argument that there is no system of education which is more or less 'neutral', then the need to reach out to a worldview that shapes material no less than cultural production in a member leading to incremental increases in wealth and social equity is obvious. Needless to say, such values ought not to acquire a monopolistic position in society, since they would, by that very measure, initiate a trend towards an authoritarian milieu. Yet the location of a liberal and egalitarian system of education within India is a vital necessity, and it should engage the attention of all those who seek to foster the well being of our society.

## Continued text

KRISHNA KUMAR

ONE remembers pieces of conversations with friends who are no more with a special poignancy. The late Rajendra Mathur-who gave Navbharat Times a lustre unknown in Hindi journalism and which no one knows how to preserve—and I were on our way to Khandawa to speak at a seminar about democracy and culture. We left the plane at Indore, ate khana at his brother's place and took a taxi for the four-hour ride to Khandawa. For quite a while our taxi drove almost parallel to the Narmada, though you could hardly see the great river which will soon become a series of sand pits and dams, courtesy the World Bank and the governments of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. The long gentle slope, flanked by dense vegetation which obviously drew moisture from the endangered river, pushed us into a nice, sentimental mood of provincial fellow-feeling.

Rajendra Mathur was senior to me by some 15 years (which is why it is so painfully hard to accept that he is dead), but in his knowledge of Madhya Pradesh he was a matchless guru, second only to his mentor, Rahul Barputey. He was a liberal in a sense our friends who only read

English papers cannot understand. He had little respect for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BIP) and felt sorry that it was in ascendance. He was sure the BJP would become as toothless as the Congress when and if it came to power at the centre. He thought the left had no business criticizing the BIP after all the glorious years they had let go by, sitting snug in their quilt of dogma. Yet, I noticed a deeply-concealed worry on his face as he said (in Hindi: 'Must I prepare to spend the evening of my life in Hindu Rashtra?' It will be silly to believe that his totally unacceptable death just over a year later was psychologically willed, but one never knows about these things. Mathur Sahib was as remote as he seemed immediate; he was easily the most modern man to come from Madhya Pradesh.

There is something about the BIP that restricts choices—you either rejoice that it is coming to power or you want to be out and gone before that happens. The reason it is so is that the BIP believes in and actively propagates a utopia. It does not propose improvements or reforms in the system, but a revolution (from a socialist perspective, a counter-

revolution). Its agenda for revolution is its ideology, and the instruments for bringing the revolution about are the cadres—of the party, the RSS, and the Bajrang Dal. There is no room in this scenario for growth of ideas and dialogue (I don't know what to make of Rajni Kothari's acknowledgement in SEMINAR [399], November 1992, that he feels 'let down' by Atal Bihari Vajpeyi).

Indeed, the moment of change is visualized in the BJP's system of ideas as a dramatic break—a riot which permits you to gather and gain all if you have the accumulated stamina to do so. This is why the BJP has greater interest in children's education than the Government of India has yet displayed. The BJP sees education as a stamina-building exercise gradual accretion of the 'right' informations, motivations and reflexes. The revisions in high school history textbooks have been made by the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh with this aim, but I wonder if these revised textbooks of U.P. have not set a new high in the general record of obnoxiousness that Indian school textbooks have maintained.

hese revisions consist of little bits of prose added here and there to the text which was originally prepared under the auspices of a Congress government in 1986 as part of a move to 'nationalize' (i.e. as opposed to privatize) textbookpublication initiated in 1975. Most of the insertions are extremely difficult to separate from the text as it existed. I am not surprised that critics of these books have ignored the previous text altogether, for unless one sat down with a fine toothcomb, comparing the older text with the revised version line by line, one would not spot the portions where changes have been made. Apparently, the job of revision has been done with considerable skill—with such skill that the teachers and children who will use these texts will not be able to notice in every case the portions representing the special effort put in by the BIP government to 'rectify' the earlier version of history. .

Atal Bihari Vajpeyi and other BTP leaders have said several times that all they wish to do in Ayodhya is

to rectify an 'error of history'. This phrase is a crude translation of their Hindi phrase; what is meant is an error permitted to be committed in the past. It would be correct to summarize the BJP philosophy of education, specifically in the context of the teaching of history, by saying that correct knowledge of history will equip children with the capacity to correct the errors committed in history.1 Thus, learning history is a futuristic task, its success depending on the ability to work out backwards, right up to the ancient times. a purpose to be attained in future.

L his way of defining the job of history teaching explains a major shift articulated in the revised text with the help of a brief, one-sentence insertion. This shift has to do with the view that the Aryans were the original inhabitants of India. The older text says (all translations of quotations given in this article are mine). Even if all Aryans had one original place of habitation, it is not possible to state anything with certainty on this matter' (p.47). The revised text has a definitive tone: ...the view that India was the original habitation of the Aryans is becoming stronger among both Indian and foreign scholars' (p. 48). This, to my mind, is the only example of a stark shift of position in the revised books compared to the older ones.

Scholarly justification for this shift is hard to find whereas ideological justification is plenty. The claim that India was the original habitation of the people called Aryans is an essential part of the ideological edifice which the BJP has inherited from and shares with the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha. The main use which the claim serves to the BJP is that it helps in 'proving' a theory which enjoys great importance in BJP's political philosophy. The theory is that belongingness depends on original habitation.

No deep analysis is needed to show that it is a rather poor theory.

Its major weakness is that it seeks to test what it also uses as evidence. Presenting India as the original habitation of the Aryans as a historical 'fact' is an attempt to relieve the theory regarding belongingness of its major weakness. In today's political circumstances it may help our morale to call this a pathetic attempt, but we ought to admit that the attempt could well enhance BP's capacity to mobilize people—to the extent education prepares the groundwork for political behaviour.

None of the other insertions, including one about the temple at Ayodhya which has been widely reported in the press, seems to me as serious as the one I have just discussed. In fact, many revisions merely add detail to an already information-packed text. A paragraph on Ambedkar has been added to the chapter on Indian renaissance. and more than a page of material on the role of newspapers has been inserted in the chapter on the freedom struggle. A two-page piece on Subhash Chandra Bose is also new. These additions can be viewed either simply as part of an attempt to enrich the narrative, or, alternatively, as part of a strategy to counterbalance other insertions which are obvious examples of the BJP line of social thought.

A three-page insert on Keshavrao Hedgewar is a case in point. One of the quotations of Hedgewar given in this piece presents a remark he made on seeing an RSS shakha in Nagpur: 'Everywhere I see lifeless tools, but here I see for the first time live people who are idols of courage and are inspired by patriotism' (p. 318). Had the revisions been confined to this piece on Hedgewar, the whole exercise of revision would have appeared undefendably politically inspired. The presence of other additions, like the one on Ambedkar, make this kind of criticism somewhat arguable.

Followers of the BJP or people sympathetic to it, may well ask why Hedgewar should not be regarded as a hero of the freedom struggle. Surely, in a full-scale narrative of the freedom struggle one would expect to find Hedgewar mentioned, but then one would also expect to

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed study of educational institutions linked to the BIP-RSS family, see my 'Hindu Revivalism and Education in North-Central India' in Social Scientist (18: 10, 1990; pp. 4-26). Also see my Political Agenda of Education (New Delhi: Sage. 1991).

find many other names. A history which has no room for the mention of Sarojini Naidu, Maulana Azad and Jayaprakash Narayan, let alone A.K. Gopalan, Ram Manohar Lohia and Sheikh Abdullah, while it has three pages uninterruptedly devoted to Keshavrao Hedgewar, is undoubtedly biased. Such an evaluation becomes uncontestable when one notices that the one-page narrative which the older text (pp. 333-334) had on Mahatma Gandhi has been deleted in the new edition.

Yet, although one may feel saddened, perhaps even revolted, by this kind of misuse of an educational space called the textbook, one cannot really pretend to be sur-prised. The deletion of a biographical sketch of Gandhi only shows what we all know the BJP leaders think. One of them recently questioned the convention of calling Gandhi the father of the nation; later, he said he continues to have high respect for Gandhiji. Apparently, the problem lies in BJP's belief that the Indian nation existed before 1947—indeed, that it has existed right since Vedic times. So Gandhiji couldn't have fathered the nation in the middle of the 20th century. In view of such logic, one understands why the page about Gandhi in the older text had to go.

In comparison, I don't find it easily understandable why the new textbook should ignore the Emergency in the coverage of Indira Gandhi's rule in the chapter on post-independence developments. I will be charged with motivated reading if I say that the BP does not find the Emergency a significantly odious fact of history. It is possible to argue that this is an oversight. Someone might argue that the chapter would have become too long—it covers 27 pages at present—if every detail had been mentioned.

But then, if selection of details is a principle the U.P. government is willing to accept, it ought to think afresh about the traditional concept of the history syllabus covering the whole of India's known history i.e. from ancient times to Narasimha Rao's rule in two years of high school, after a student has had a similar panoramic journey in three

years of middle school. It would be a major reform if the government—any government, or government organization, even the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)—appreciated the advantage of going deep into a few segments of knowledge compared to skimming a vast surface such as the entire history of India. I find it hard to imagine that the U.P. government refrained from mentioning the Emergency out of its concern for the burden that fat textbooks place on children's shoulders and minds.

More plausible—by way of analysis, not by way of guessing what actually happened in the string of events in the decision-making process—is to see this omission as a proof of the underlying continuity between the older and the revised versions of the U.P. textbooks. I have said earlier that the changes brought about by the revisions are difficult to spot, so well do they mix with the older text. This cannot be explained away by referring to the skill of the revising editors alone. There is a deeper structure, that of ideas, which permits the revised portions to be assimilated in the older text. It hardly matters that the textbooks were originally prepared under a Congress regime.

have been arguing for some time that cultural ideology, of the kind which the BJP represents rather blatantly today, is not an instrument by which we can make neat distinctions among the political forces active in India. If it were possible to do so, it would be so much easier to isolate the BJP's agenda and culture or to counter it. The grim fact is that the BJP's cultural agenda is diffusely present in the epistemology and mind-set of the educated classes of north Indian society. (The only candidates for exception are the suave, monolingual elite who have

abetted the absorption of the mass language called Hindi into the repertoire of cultural revivalism. Many of them are these days busy accommodating the BUP's angularities in a flexible interpretation of Indian state policy.)

In view of the pervasive influence that cultural revivalism has had among the educated, it hardly matters which ruling party in U.P. orders the preparation or revision of history textbooks. The helplessness of the situation is compounded by the poor-quality professional manpower generally available for the task of textbook writing. In most cases, irrespective of the choices made, one would expect a textbook-author to be steeped in the general beliefs and scenarios of the past in which the urban middle class feels at home.

Aost important among these is the belief that persecutionary policies of some of the rulers of medieval India were directed against the Hindu population. This belief informs and explains a large number of the reflexes the educated urban north Indian displays in what remains of the intellectual element in his middle class family life. The U.P. textbooks in their Congress-ordered version copiously represented these reflexes. (No one bothered to comment on these books over the last six years of their use because no one takes school education and textbooks that seriously.) In the BJP version of these textbooks, the reflexes get accentuated in placesthat is all. There isn't really much scope here for someone to corner the BIP, especially when no one-not even the highest placed public men —has managed to put them in a spot over the far less subtle Ayodhya controversy.

Let me examine the text of what is probably the most provocative addition in the revised version and compare it with the unrevised text. The context is Babur's religious policy. The revised text says:

Babur, the founder of the Moghul dynasty in India, was a man of scholarship and culture. A study of his works clarifies that he could not give his Hindu

<sup>2.</sup> Apart from the Social Scientist (lbid.) article, see 'Aims and Politics' in Seminar (297), 1984, 'Foul Contract' in Seminar (377), 1991.

<sup>3.</sup> They learn an Indian language during one 35-minute period every schoolday. From the Delhi English-medium schools, it seems, no avid reader of Hindi literature has ever been produced by this one period, though English-medium people never seem to get bored claiming that they can read Hindi books.

public the rights which were available to Muslims. In his memoir he calls the Hindus 'kafirs' and the battles against them 'jihad' (religious war). The temples of Chanderi and Ayodhya were (also) demolished under his regime. Babur's local officer Mirwaqui got a mosque built in place of the temple demolished in Ayodhya. Although this building is controversial, nevertheless the Hindu public believes it to be a temple (p. 146).

The older version is the same from 'Babur, the founder...' to '...under his regime'. Here it quoted Shriram Sharma as saying: 'There is no reason to believe that Babur had applied any leniency in the rigour of the prevailing religious policy' (p. 174).

I wow I suppose it can be said that it makes a terrible difference if the Ayodhya controversy gets mentioned in a direct manner. Such an argument will be in keeping with the orthodoxy entrenched in our educational, more specifically pedagogical, culture which insists that children be told nothing that has a negative connotation to it. So in 12 years of schooling you don't study caste or poverty. It is consistent with this policy that children should not read about the Ayodhya issue in their textbooks. The U.P. text shocks us because it breaks the taboo against the mention of controversial issues in school, not so much because it writes what it does about Babur. Supposing the U.P. government is somehow forced—it is hard to imagine it can be persuadedto drop the sentence about Babur's officer replacing the Ayodhya temple with a mosque, would it make all that big a difference to the knowledge and attitude of a school-going child?

To settle this question, I decided to look up a text widely regarded as

a model of secular historiography. Medieval India (for Class XI-XII), published by the NCHRT and written by Satish Chandra, is part of the series that has been admired all these years by left-leaning friends and criticized by Hindu revivalists. So bright and holy is the name of this series among liberals that if you don't feel enthusiastic and perfectly cheerful about it, something is presumed to be wrong with your liberalism. Under the sub-heading 'Significance of Babur's Advent into India' (pp. 130-131), the textbook on medieval India (originally in English) says:

Babur was fond of wine and good company and was a good and merry companion. At the same time, he was a stern disciplinarian and a hard taskmaster. He took good care of his begs, and was prepared to excuse many of their faults as long as they were not disloyal. He was prepared to adopt the same attitude towards his Afghan and Indian nobles. However, he did have a streak of cruelty, probably inherited from his ancestors, for he made towers of skulls from the heads of his opponents on a number of occasions. These, and other instances of personal cruelty, have to be seen in the context of the harsh times in which Babur lived.

Though an orthodox Sunni, Babur was not bigoted or led by the religious divines. At a time when there was a bitter sectarian feud between the Shias and the Sunnis in Iran and Turan, his court was free from theological and sectarian conflicts. Though he declared the battle against Sanga a jihad and assumed the title of ghazi after the victory, the reasons were clearly political. Though it was a period of war, only a few instances can be found of destruction of temples.

have on more than one occasion seen this text being taught, and Ayodhya was invariably mentioned as an obvious contemporary context which was supposed to help one make sense of the text. I don't see how it helps the cause of secularism if the text puts in the mysterious

clause, 'the reasons were clearly political'. If the author meant business, he would have told his young readers what 'clearly' meant. For that matter, the author or the National Council would have noticed, what I have seen many children notice, the contradiction between the attribution of Babur's cruelty to his (apparently genetic) inheritance and the clarification that his cruelty could be understood in the context of his harsh times.

If 'secular' also means 'rational' then surely it is not worthwhile making a distinction between this portion of the NCERT textbook and the U.P. texts. This need not mean that I am denigrating the contribution that the NCERT's history series has generally made to the development of textbook writing in India. However, responsible writing for children demands that we consider an altogether different style of textbook writing. The single Indian example of a different style are the social studies textbooks published by Eklavya, a famous and extensive voluntary institution, currently accumulating chunky bits of the BJP's wrath in Madhya Pradesh where Eklavya was born some 10 years ago out of the now-defunct, equally famous and radical Kishore Bharati which was founded by Anil Sadgopal over two decades ago.

The telling feature of these textbooks is the warmth they exude towards children. Both the style of writing and the illustrations are geared towards enabling children to gain confidence in their search of the past based on reasoning and understanding. One example of this approach is the chapter called 'How to find out: what happened and what didn't' in the Class VII text. The chapter presents two documentary records of Tuglaq's decision to move his capital. Children are asked to compare and analyze the two records and examine the implications of each for forming an impression of Tuglaq's personality.

Another example of the analytical method is the chapter in the Class VIII book on Aurangzeb which acknowledges that 10 years after coming to the throne he ordered the demolition of all newly-built temples, and in

<sup>4</sup> It appears the revised books are still being proofed and edited. The copy that I got access to with the help of an official indicates that an adjective meaning 'innumerable' will be inserted before 'Hindu public' and the clause 'a temple' will ultimately read as 'Ram temple'. It is interesting that there is no intention, at least so far, of describing the temple as the birth place of Lord Ram.

the 21st year of his rule he re-imposed the jazia on Hindus. The book now asks children to determine what might be the motive for these steps: Some historians say that he was a fanatic, that is why he broke temples and imposed jazia. But if that was so, why didn't he take these steps as soon as he came to the throne? Why did he feel the need to adopt certain policies towards the Hindus after 10-20 years of his rule?' (my translation from Hindi p. 43). A likely reason, the book suggests, might be that Aurangzeb's rule got into trouble, and that is when he started to please different groups, especially the conservative amirs and Islamic priests.

A glance at these unusual texts reveals to us a critical difference between two approaches to education. One is hegemonic, the other is democratic. Each has its political agenda and a preferred pedagogical culture. The problem with the secular political agenda in our country has been that its proponents ignored the task of developing a pedagogical culture consistent with their vision. Some of them had the imagination to do so, but children's education was a blob of cow dung too far beneath their political and social status for them to touch. An occasional spurt of concern marked the ceaseless boredom of educational policy, and what really was a non-policy was flaunted in the late 1980s as an exciting draft of future deeds.

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Today, the future looks too far or too close, depending on which future one wishes to live in. To the rationalist, secular India looks a distant dream; to the religious revivalist, a matter of one last hop. To my mind, the U.P. textbooks are a minor part of the continued unfolding of the essentially colonial agenda of education which subordinated the intellectual role of education to its contribution to the maintenance of social order. Altering this agenda will require more work than the Indian state has been willing to put in for the sake of education. Shortterm strategies to counter the BIP's attempt to create false consciousness about ancient India and to underplay Gandhi's contribution to the freedom struggle do, of course, still remain tasks that we should attend to.

The perennial Aryans

ROMILA THAPAR

WHEN the theory of the Aryan race was first thought up in 19th century Europe, its inventors did not know that it would lead to a holocaust in Europe and to riots in South Asia. If Aryanism was for Germany the nationalistic denial of barbarism among the German tribes who opposed Rome, in South Asia too it has become foundational to a nationalistic identity. The theory of Aryan race is not limited to some facets of Indian nationalism. It has also been used in the debate on the Sinhala identity, where some Sinhala groups claiming to be of Aryan origin, demarcated themselves from the Tamils. Much effort has gone into working out the degree of Aryan-ness in contemporary Sinhalas. The issue is not merely one of degrees of racial purity, but, as in

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the Indian situation, also hinges on the question of who were the first inhabitants of the land who might be associated with the introduction of civilization. That these questions in themselves are no longer valid seldom strikes those who pose them.

In all such movements there is little problem in discarding attempts at factual history and replacing it with that mythology which is important to the self-perception of a certain kind of narrow nationalism arising from a particular social group. The search is for an identity in modern times but its parameters are imposed by the past. This is then justified as the rewriting of history from a national perspective. In fact it is really the inoculation of a particularly vicious racist ideology into the understanding of history. And when this is done at the level of school textbooks, it becomes all the more pernicious.

In references to nationalism it is necessary to distinguish between Indian nationalism in the broad sense where all Indians were regarded as equal citizens and the intention was to make them participants in social well-being, and the more narrowly defined nationalism of a section of society, where such a section is seen as more equal than others and certainly more privileged because it constitutes the majority. When nationalism draws on ideas such as Hindutva or Hindu nationalism, then it seeks to justify itself through a partisan history. The kinds of changes—what is referred to as the rewriting of history—which have been introduced into textbooks by the BJP governments are not motivated by historical accuracy. Rather, they are an attempt to find historical bases for its own ideology. I would like to discuss two of these changes, namely, that the Aryans were indigenous to India and that Chandragupta Maurya and Chanakya were instrumental in creating a nationalist ethos in ancient India.

It is as well to remember that the term Aryan applies only to a language: it refers to, and is a shortened version of, Aryan-speaking-peoples. People cannot be identified racially as Aryan since there is no such racial category. But the word 'race'

is loosely and incorrectly used in general parlance. Hence the frequency of expressions such as 'the Indian race' or 'the Hindu race' which, strictly speaking, are meaningless. The Aryan race was an invention of the European imagination and it has now been discarded in the West, except among a variety of white racist terrorist groups. There is also no such thing as 'a pure race' for people have been constantly intermingling.

People can only be identified as Aryan-speaking and, since the same language can be spoken by people belonging to different racial groups depending on the historical context, a language cannot be equated with a race. For example, it would be grossly wrong for historians in A.D. 4000 to assume that since all North Americans in A.D. 1900 spoke English, therefore they must have all belonged to the same race. Historical situations involving more than one racial group speaking the same language have been frequent in the early past as well. Given the diversity of origin of the peoples of the Indian subcontinent and the numerous migrations and movements in this and the larger geographical area from 6000 B.C. onwards, it would be incorrect to assume that if they spoke languages of the same language family, they must have been racially of the same stock. This axiom that language can never be equated with race was stated even by Max Mueller but was ignored in popular theories in the 19th century. Therefore to state that 'the Aryans' were indigenous to India makes little sense.

Who then were 'the Aryans'? Aryan, which is a language, referred to technically as Indo-Aryan or Old Indo-Aryan, is known to us in its carliest form as the language of the Vedas: the earlier Rig Veda and the later Sama, Yajur and Atharva Vedas. Old Indo-Aryan has as its ancestral language, Indo-European. It also has similarities with Old Avestan and Old Iranian and philological parallels with some European languages. The earliest evidence for Old Indo-Aryan comes from the Rig Veda and the geographical background of this text relates to Afghanistan and the Punjab and

particularly the area which is now in Pakistan—the sapta sindhu.

The language of the Rig Veda has close affinities to Old Avestan, closer than the language of the later Vedas. This earlier link with Avestan indicates a movement from West Asia to India by Aryan-speakers. The geographical background to the later Vedas is that of the western and middle Ganga valley and the language of these texts indicates a greater borrowing from non-Aryan languages associated with this area. The language therefore changed and evolved over the centuries as it was used by a variety of ethnic peoples, some of whom, or whose forefathers, originally spoke other languages.

edic Sanskrit provides evidence of dialect variations which can be used to trace the geographical movement of the speakers of Old Indo-Aryan, to assist in trying to work out a chronology for the composition of the Vedas and to assess the importance of non-Aryan language elements in them. The geographical movement is from the north-west into the Ganga valley. The generally accepted chronology is that the Rig Vedic hymns were composed over a period extending from about 1500 to 1000 B.C., with some hymns of a slightly later period. The other three Vedas are dated to approximately 800 to 500 B.C. or thereabouts. Some references to what have been interpreted as configurations of stars have been used to suggest dates of about 4000 B.C. for these hymns but there is now little general acceptance among scholars for this argument. Planetary positions could have been observed in earlier times and such observations been handed down as part of an oral tradition. So these do not constitute proof of the chranology of the Vedic hymns.

There were a number of non-Aryan languages current in northern India where the Aryan language spread. These have been listed in broad categories as Proto-Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman. Archaeological evidence points to settlements and cultures in northern India prior to 1500 B.C. These cultures are likely to have been speakers of any of the non-Aryan languages.

Vedic compositions make it clear that they were speakers of other languages among whom the Aryan-speakers settled and the former could not always use the Aryan language correctly and were therefore treated as alien by the Aryan-speakers. Terms such as mridhra-vac and mleccha, referred to those who spoke Indo-Aryan incorrectly.

Yet, as some scholars maintain, at the same time there are characteristics of non-Aryan languages, such as retroflexive consonants, even in Rig Vedic Sanskrit. The notion of what was the correct language would also undergo change. The language of the Harappans, when the script has been deciphered, will mark a major breakthrough in the history of language in northern India. Inspite of repeated attempts the script remains undeciphered so far. Attempts to read it as Proto-Dravidian have been more systematic than those reading it as Indo-Aryan because the reconstructions of Sanskrit which have been suggested deviate from the known rules of Sanskrit grammar. However, the language of the Harappans remains an open question.

L he linguistic evidence of Vedic Sanskrit supports the coming into India of an Indo-European language from Iran but does not support the notion that India was the homeland the Aryan-speaking people. Attempts have therefore been made to use a different set of evidence and to try and identify one of the many archaeological cultures in India as Aryan'. However, material remains which constitute archaeological cultures cannot provide the identity of the language used by the authors of the cultures, particularly in the absence of a script. At most a comparison can be made between the material remains found in excavations and the description of material culture from the texts, in an effort to analyze the nature of given societies.

But even this has little to do with defining and identifying the language or languages used by the people whose settlements have been excavated. There is therefore little point in turning to archaeology for evidence of 'the Aryans', yet attempts are made to do this. Because references are made to the supposed archaeological evidence, it would be as well to briefly review the archaeological picture in northern India at that time.

L here is evidence of contact between sites along the Bolan pass (in Baluchistan) and sites in the Oxus region going back to 6000 B.C. After the Harappan period these contacts appear to have been resumed but they do not cross the Indus into India. There is considerable maritime contact between the Indus civilization and Mesopotamia during the Harappan period in the third millennium B.C. However, the languages of Mesopotamia were not of the Indo-European group. It is only later, between 1800 and 1500 B.C., that there is evidence of languages of the Indo-European family suddenly appearing in Turkey and Mesopotamia.

The Indus civilization came as far as the Ganga-Yamuna Doab and northern Maharashtra. It is difficult to equate this civilization with descriptions in the Vedic compositions since they each represent entidifferent cultures. centres were the focus of Harappan life, there was a familiarity with writing and trade, the culture was prior to the discovery of iron and evidence for the use of the horse is sparse. Vedic culture, on the other hand, is not urban but is pastoral and agricultural, has no knowledge of writing and extensive trading, knows the use of iron, and the horse has a central role both in function and ritual.

Some Harappan traits did continue into later periods since there are a few sites with overlapping levels of late. Harappan and post-Harappan cultures. Some of these traits could have been picked up by the Aryan-speakers. Some time around 1000 B.C. there is evidence of the Gandhara Grave culture in the Swat valley (in Pakistan) having contacts with eastern Iran. Possibly small migrant groups from West Asia were arriving in the north-west and merging with the local population. However, the evidence of the Gandhara Grave culture stops in that region and does not spread across the

Punjab and into the western Ganga plain.

In Haryana and the western Ganga plain, there was an earlier Ochre Colour Pottery culture going back to about 1500 B.C. or some elements of the Chalcolithic cultures using Black-and-Red Ware. Later in about 800 B.C. there evolved the Painted Grey Ware culture. The geographical focus of this culture seems to be the Doab, although the pottery is widely distributed across northern Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana and western U.P. None of these post-Harappan cultures, identifiable by their pottery, are found beyond the Indus. Yet this would be expected if 'the Aryans' were a people and indigenous to India with some diffusion to Iran, and if the attempt was to find archaeological co-relates for the affinities between Old Indo-Aryan and Old Avestan.

If there is no evidence for a diffusion outwards there is also no evidence for a large scale invasion from West Asia via the north-west into the Indian subcontinent. The idea of such an invasion followed from a mention in the Rig Veda of the destruction of puras, walled settlements. and this was interpreted as alluding to the destruction of the Harappan cities by 'the Aryans'. However, it is now generally accepted that the decline of the Harappan cities was due to environmental changes of various kinds and a possible break in trading activities, and not to any invasion.

The likely picture is that there were small groups of Aryan-speaking migrants from Iran who settled and mingled with various populations and cultures in the north-west. And gradually over the centuries the language which evolved, Old Indo-Aryan, spread from Punjab and Afghanistan to the Indo-Gangetic watershed and the Ganga valley (as indeed I have argued earlier in this magazine, SEMINAR [364] December 1989, p.17).

And what do Indian sources have to say on the subject? The imposition of the Aryan theory of race on ancient Indian history began with the reading of the Rig Veda in which mention is made of the arya. The Rig Veda distinguishes between two varnas—the arya and the dasa. The difference is substantially cultural—a difference in customs, religious practices and perhaps language and a possible physical difference in that some dasas are said to have dark skins and snub noses. This does not imply, as is popularly believed, that the arya was invariably tall, fair, long-nosed and blue-eyed.

he term arya is more frequently used with reference to those who are familiar with Sanskrit, occupy an honoured or respectable status, are generous in giving dana and uphold the rules of varna. This did not stop the good brahman from accepting donations from the dasa and performing rituals for them. Like all cattle-herding societies, the clans of the Rig Veda were given to endless skirmishes and cattle-raids, a few of which took on the dimension of battles. These were not always between the arya and the dasa. as is popularly supposed, but were also among and between the clans occupying an honoured status.

Some of these clans may have been given the status but in fact were of uncertain origin. Thus the Purus, ancestral to the protagonists of the war in the Mahabharata, are described as descended from an ashura rakshasha (quite clearly not an 'Aryan') and, not surprisingly, speak a faulty Sanskrit (mridhravac). To argue then that the Rig Veda in differentiating between the arya and dasa varna is basically describing two separate racial entities is merely to impose a 19th century European concept of race on to the Rig Veda.

What spread from the north-west in the Ganga valley was not a body of racially pure 'Aryans', but rather the use of the language, Old Indo-Aryan. This is likely to have been through its adoption by local people and its function in ritual. Why it was so adopted raises a number of major questions for the historian. Answers may lie in the language being associated with various technologies which provided it with an edge in the north Indian environment. Those through whom the

language arrived in a new area and those who, living in such an area, started using it, and were speakers of divergent languages. The process of bi-lingualism may have been one reason for the changes in Old Indo-Aryan.

Elements of non-Aryan were incorporated in Vedic Sanskrit because it was being used in the vicinity of non-Aryan speakers and by initially non-Aryan speakers themselves. The language therefore underwent change when it came to be used by a variety of people. Such changes can be traced in the vocabulary and syntax which draw on other languages. The incorporation of new features in the language points to a parallel inter-mixing of peoples and ways of life. The authors of sections of the Vedas and of the Mahabharata and Ramayana, were aryas because they used Sanskrit, were members of the upper castes and, in theory, observed the rules of varna.

However, varna rules which are erroneously believed to have preserved racial purity, were happily broken. There is the example of Veda Vyasa or Krishna Dvaipayana, the redactor of the Mahabharata: he was the son of the brahman Parashara and a low caste fisherwoman Satyavati. There is no way in which he could pass for an 'Aryan' if a racial meaning is given to the term. And there are other such examples. As far as being of 'the Aryan race', such persons were by now too mixed through marriages and unions of various kinds, to be anything other than the result of local inter-breeding.

The question then is, why is it so necessary to insist that 'the Aryans' as a broader category originated from India? In part it is an attempt to argue that what are perceived as the roots of Indian and European culture originated in India, and India is therefore the cradle of what used to be called the Indo-European culture; forgetting of course that the research of this century has indicated that the Indo-European or 'Aryan' component is no longer the foundation of civilization in either India or Europe but is a linguistic manifestation in the evolution of early history. At another level it is an

attempt to project a unified, continuous Indian identity where Aryanism, encapsulated in the culture of the Vedas and the upper castes, is not only at the root of Indian history, but moulds history and is projected as the major cultural expression of India. Furthermore, that what are described as 'Aryan' beliefs and values, are eternal. This definition of 'Aryan' draws neither from Indian history nor from linguistics or for that matter, the modern study of culture.

he equation of language and race in Europe in the 19th century was important to claiming racial purity for the European aristocracy and to build up anti-Semitism. In the Indian context it was equally important for claiming racial purity for the upper castes. Caste society was explained earlier as a system of racial segregation where the separateness of each caste was maintained over the centuries by controlling marriage through caste rules. Thus even into modern times those castes which were familiar with Sanskrit learning—inevitably the upper castes could claim racial purity. Implicit in this theory therefore is the superiority of upper castes and the edging out of lower castes as contributors to the Indian mainstream. Rooting 'the Aryans' in India also coincides with the popular belief that north Indians are Aryans whereas south Indians (apart from the brahmans) are non-Aryans and therefore the former are implicitly superior to the latter. This is not a revival of past national glory but an attempt to maintain social inequality through recourse to 'history'.

Empirical evidence as we have it today supports neither the theory of Aryan race, nor that of the invasion of India by 'the Aryans', nor For that matter the theory of the indigenous Indian origin of 'the Aryans'. This is not of interest only to historians. The theory of the Aryans being a people has been seen as fundamental to the understanding of the identity of modern Indians and the question of identity is central to the change in Indian society from caste to class. The upholding of a false theory is dangerous. The next step can be to move from the indigenous origin of

'the Aryans' to propagating the notion of an 'Aryan nation'.

Already the BJP textbooks have taken nationalism back to the Mauryan period. But nationalism is a historically specific condition and the kind of nationalism that one is familiar with in the last two centuries has to do with industrialization and imperialism, both in Europe and in what were the colonies. It was this nationalism in India that emphasized an independent rule by Indians and the equality of Indian citizenship. To say that Chandragupta Maurya and Chanakya were nationalists because they stood up against the foreign (i.e. Greek) invaders in the northwest and that there was a consciousness of an all-India entity called Jambudvipa or Bharatavarsha, is to distort history.

here is no evidence that Chandragupta or Chanakya organized Indian kings against Alexander and the Greeks. The young Chandragupta's ambition was to capture the throne of the Nanda king at Pataliputra and he appears to have been uninterested in the Greeks. Towards the end of his reign he made an amicable treaty with the Greek, Seleucus Nicator ruling in Iran. As for Chanakya's fight against foreign forces, a Sanskrit play of a later date, the Mudrarakshasa, presents a picture of sordid intrigue on the part of Chanakya in which the Greeks and Persians are merely listed as among the many allies of the Nanda king. They do not even arouse a comment from Chanakya. It does seem interesting that Chanakya should now be projected as the conscience-keeper of Indian nationalism, given that he had so little use for political moralityl

As regards the consciousness of the unity of India, the precise connotation of the terms used for India need to be clarified. The terms used by West Asians—the Hindush of the Persian kings, the Indoi of the Greeks, the Indica of Latin writers and the al-Hind of the Arabs—were all terms derived from the name of the Indus, the Sindhu, which they saw as the great divide, and the terms used referred to the land on the other side. It was not a geo-

graphically exact definition but very broadly so and what came to be included in it depended on current knowledge of the area on the part of the writers.

For the Persians it was only the north-west. The Greek and Latin sources expand their descriptions of India as and when they become familiar with new areas of Indian geography; hence the limited knowledge of Ktesias, the enhanced knowledge of Megasthenes and the much more detailed information of the geographer Ptolemy and the historian Pliny. For the Arabs, al-Hind was initially the trans-Indus region and only gradually came to include other areas. Although the authors use the same name for the large territory which approximated the Indian subcontinent, nevertheless none of them speak of the Indians in all these areas constitu-ting a single nation. 'Indian' is not a term of national identity in these texts but is essentially a term of proximate geographical placement.

The Indian concepts of Jambudvipa and Bharatavarsha were again not exact geographical concepts but were cosmological notions. Jambudvipa, used as early as the Mauryan period, appears to have included more than the Indian subcontinent. Bharatavarsha, references to which are much later, was one of its nine divisions. Bharatavarsha in turn was divided into nine areas each one an island separated by enclosing seas. Clearly there was not even an attempt at geographical exactitude. The identification of various regions with Bharatavarsha is recent. The Mauryan empire may have included almost the whole of the subcontinent but it lasted as such for barely a century and rapidly broke up into smaller kingdoms and states. This does not support 'the sublime nature of national culture' as projected by

If Indian patriotism is to be strengthened then attention must turn to the problems of the present and their alleviation in a manner which will make Indians take a pride in our society. Teaching spurious history to the next generation of young Indians is not the way to go about it.

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# State sponsored communalization

SEMINARIST

A DISTORTED view of India's history is a major component of the ideology of communalism. Many scholars of Indian historiography have traced the communalist distortion of Indian history to the works of a number of early British historians of India, some of which were sponsored by the British government in India, and to Indian historical writings, some of which were inspired by certain aspects of Indian nationalism in its early phase. The process of the corrections of these distortions which was initiated by nationalist historians in the preindependence period, has been carried forward by a large number of historians since independence and it can be said that in contemporary Indian historical writings the communalist framework no longer occupies a position of influence. Their impact on the teaching of history in schools has been marginal.

The main, and in most cases the sole, source of historical knowledge for both students and teachers are the textbooks which are recommended and/or prescribed by the educational authorities in the states. Realizing the importance of history textbooks, efforts have been made during the past two or three decades to free history textbooks from communalist distortions. These efforts have been initiated by the state or have had the support of the state except during a short period in the late 1970s when the process was sought to be reversed. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), an organization set up by the Government of India, brought out history textbooks, most of them written by eminent historians, which have been acclaimed for their secular and scientific approach. The NCERT also initiated a programme of textbook evaluation with a view to helping educational agencies eliminate some of the more gross distortions from the instructional materials, particularly in history and languages.

Most of the school textbooks up to the secondary stage are prepared and brought out by state agencies though a significant number are still brought out by private publishers. Some of the evils associated with textbook publishing such as corruption and profiteering, which had been pointed out by the Education Commission (1964-66), have been ended as a result of nationalization. But the general quality of the textbooks, both private and nationalized, has not improved very greatly. The evaluation of history textbooks undertaken by educational authorities in the states some years ago brought to light the poor quality of most of the textbooks used in the country. The main criteria of evaluation were to see that the presentation of the past was authentic and free from factual inaccuracies and that it did not promote communal. casteist and regional prejudices.

A large number of textbooks were found to be abounding in inaccuracies and communalist and even racialist presentations. Efforts were made by some of the state textbook agencies to revise their textbooks and, at least, to remove some of the

more gross distortions. In the case of one Board of Secondary Education, each of the 12 private publishers' textbooks recommended for use by senior secondary students was found to be unsuitable and was removed from its list of recommended textbooks. Some of the worst history textbooks are used in the private schools in Delhi and elsewhere. Most of these private schools are affiliated to another Board, located in Delhi. This Board does not evaluate and recommend books and apparently gives the schools total freedom in the choice of textbooks.

A few quotations to illustrate the kind of historical knowledge that some of these textbooks provide to young children would suffice. On the caste system: 'It helped a lot in preserving the Hindu culture and religion. It maintained a high standard of morality and purity of blood.' On the influence of geography on Indian history: 'There is no doubt that this separation of the North and the South has sometimes led to separatist tendencies but it has benefited us too. In times of danger it has served as a 'Safety Zone' for the culture of North. Whenever the Hindus were persecuted by the Muslim rulers in the North they slipped away to the South and saved their lives. The Hindu culture, literature and religion were thus saved from extinction. All this was made possible due to the existence of the Satpura and the Vindhya hills.' On the 'Aryan race': 'Aryan race is considered among the famous superior and civilized races of the world.... Most people in India, and Englishmen, Iranians, Germans, Spaniards, French etc. feel pride in consider-ing themselves descendants of the Aryans. According to them pure blood of the Aryans flows in their veins.'

Some of the most blatantly communalist distortions occur in the treatment of medieval Indian history. Most of these textbooks present the entire period as one of conflict between the foreign Muslim rulers and Hindu subjects. Most also give to the young readers the impression that to be a Muslim is, as a rule, to be intolerant of other religions.

Some examples of such writings may be appropriate to quote here. On Mahmud Ghaznavi: 'Mahmud was a robber. He did not intend to set up his rule in India. He was very greedy. He was a true Muslim. He destroyed the temples and killed the Hindus.' On Akbar: 'Though he was a Muslim he did not force his Hindu subjects to follow the Muslim religion.' On Aurangzeb: 'He placed the entire resources of the empire at the disposal of the missionary propaganda of his faith.... Doors of Government service were closed for the Hindus.' On Shivaji: 'He conceived the noblest idea of liberating his "country and religion" from foreign yoke, and nobly did he carry it out by consecrating his whole life to the sacred cause .... His grateful countrymen have ever looked upon him "as an incarnation of God" and even today no other name stirs the pulse of the mighty Hindu community from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin as that of the great Maratha leader.'

he last quotation is from the late R.C. Majumdar's A Brief History of India which, first published in 1925 and revised in its 34th edition in 1977, is still used in schools in some parts of the country. He alone among the authors of the textbooks quoted above was a professional historian. Most of the others, generally historically illiterate and innocent of historical studies, merely reproduced with a slight change in language other textbooks in the belief that they were stating esta-blished historical truths. Majumdar was the General Editor of the 11volume The History and Culture of the Indian People published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. A number of scholars were associated with the preparation of these volumes which consistently followed a communalist framework.

In the preface to the first volume (The Vedic Age), Majumdar wrote: 'This volume attempts a picture of what may be regarded as the dawn of Hindu civilization... the next two volumes reflect its full morning glory and noonday splendour; in the fourth volume we come across the shadows of the declining day, while dusk sets in with the fifth. Then follows the darkness of the long

night, so far as Hindu civilization is concerned, a darkness which envelops it even now.' The setting in of dusk refers to the Ghaznavid invasion which is covered in the fifth volume while the long night began with the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate.

In his preface to the sixth volume (The Delhi Sultanate) Majumdar wrote: '...for the first time in Indian history, two distinct but important communities and cultures stood face to face, and India was permanently divided into two powerful units, each with a marked individuality of its own, which did not prove to be amenable to a fusion or even any close permanent coordination. The problem which then faced India has proved to be the most knotty one in its chequered history during the next six hundred years, and has not entirely been solved by the partition or bifurcation of India.' The establishment of the British rule, to him, was merely the exchange of 'one foreign yoke for another'.

Majumdar's views have been quoted extensively for the clear statement of the communalist framework of Indian history that they provide. They were considered standard historical works suitable for study by college and university students and for that reason, during the Janata party rule, it was decided to translate them into all major Indian languages.

■ he communalist framework which many of these textbooks followed was not in response to a deliberate policy decision by the state even when such textbooks were produced by nationalized textbook agencies. The authority of the state to impose a communalist framework on history textbooks was sought to be used for the first time in 1977 soon after the Janata party formed its government at the centre. Some history textbooks of the NCERT and some others were sought to be withdrawn on the ground that they 'presented a completely different view of the image of the country far removed from traditional and cultural and scientific values'.

dusk sets in with the fifth. Then From the specific objections that follows the darkness of the long were raised to these books, it is clear.

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that what was objected to was the secular and scientific view to the study of Indian history that these books promoted. The demand to withdraw these books was decried by most historians and others throughout the country and the books survived the government of the Janata party. However, one textbook—R.S. Sharma's Ancient India, which was published after the Janata party had come to power, was withdrawn from the list of recommended textbooks by the Central Board of Secondary Education on the instruction of the Union Ministry of Education. It was restored on the list after the Janata party went out of power.

Lt was also at this time that the communal historians formed their Indian History and Culture Society with the blessings of the then Union Minister of Education. Many of them are presently historians of the Sangh Parivar and are behind the second and latest attempt to use state power to communalize history textbooks-this time more successfully than before—which began in 1991 in states in which the Bharativa Janata Party (BJP) had come to power. The leading role in this regard is being played by the government of Uttar Pradesh where the matter has been pursued with greater vigour than in other BJP-ruled states under the guidance of Rajnath Singh, Education Minister of the

The intellectual resources of all the organizations of the Sangh Parivar have been mobilized to, in the words of R.K. Malkani, introduce 'healthy nationalism in the educational system' and to glorify, in the words of Rajnath Singh, 'our own heroes. our own rich cultural heritage and tradition'. (Interestingly, during his visit to Pakistan Malkani was shocked to see that Pakistanis had already done to history what his governments were just beginning to do.) The Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, and the Bharatiya Shikshana Mandal, among others, are playing their part.

Besides what they are doing in the states, they are also demanding that other states follow their example. Writing books, even textbooks, takes

time. But the urgency of introducing 'healthy nationalism' and glorifying our own heroes, our own rich cultural heritage and tradition' was so pressing that they had to make do by revising some of the existing textbooks by deleting some statements and adding new ones. Some of the pressing issues that could not await the writing of new textbooks are mentioned in what follows. They were first discussed at a national conference on Indian history which was held at Lucknow in April 1992. Most of the participants in this conference were from U.P. and a few from M.P. The revision of some textbooks is mentioned among the achievements of Uttar Pradesh for the development of education in 1991-92 in a publicity brochure brought out by the government.

The first major issue relates to the original home of the Aryans. Some Indians, for purely 'patriotic' reasons, have always held the view that the Aryans were indigenous to India and that they spread to other parts of the world from Indian soil. Tilak believed the Aryan homeland to have been in the Arctic and his patriotism could not be doubted. So the patriotic believers in the Indian homeland of the Aryans had shifted the Arctic to lie within India.

here are many unresolved questions relating to what is called the 'Aryan problem'. Most scholars hold the view that the word does not stand for a 'racial' group but for people belonging to a particular language family which includes Sanskrit. The discovery of the Harappa culture led to another problem as that culture clearly seemed to have pre-existed the Vedic culture. But it began to be claimed by 'patriotic' historians that the Aryans were pre-Harappan. And the argument has gone on and on.

In July 1991, the Mythic Society and the Bharatiya Itihas Sankalan Yojana Samiti organized a seminar on the Aryan problems at Bangalore. The resolution passed at the seminar demanded that the results of new researches should be incorporated in the textbooks in place of the old, incorrect and outmoded theories and to 'at least incorporate the other side of the theories pro-

pounded by the Western scholars so that, our students do not have to study incorrect history. This will help in developing a sound national outlook?

The resolution was circulated by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad with a covering letter which stated that the theory of the non-Indian origin of the Aryans 'was a part of the conspiracy of the foreign rulers that they wanted to create an impression in us, so that we should not have a deep attachment to Bharat'. The national conference on Indian history, mentioned earlier, recommended that: 'In reality Aryan civilization originated and developed in India' and that 'it has been proved by new evidences and discoveries that Harappan civilization and Aryan civilization were parts of the same civilization.'

he problem of the Harappan culture being urban and Vedic (Aryan) being pastoral-agricultural has been resolved in an ingenious manner. The recommendation explains, 'According to the picture which the Vedic literature presents, a group of some people which was engaged in farming, cattle breeding, teaching/learning was inhabiting the forests. At the same time, another group was leading an urban life and was engaged in long distance trade through roads, river routes and sea routes. The same situation prevails in India today where there are six lakh villages and only 600 cities. There is a difference in the living styles of the two although culturally both are living according to the same values of life.' The revised version of the textbook entitled High School Itihas—Bhag I brought out recently has dutifully included these 'findings' in the relevant chapters!

That the motives for the revisions are more 'patriotic' than academic is clear from another question which is being pressed with a great deal of urgency. Aryans were the creators of Indian culture and civilization. Indian culture is what developed in ancient India which was essentially Hindu culture and all that happened subsequently was 'foreign' intrusion which should be totally rejected. People whose ancestors were not indigenous to India and elements of

culture which were not a part of ancient Hindu culture are not truly Indian.

The Education Minister of U.P. was asked by a press reporter the reason why the theory about Aryans being natives of India was not included in the textbooks earlier if there was historical evidence to support the theory. He replied: 'It was a blunder on the part of successive governments not to have included it in the syllabus. In fact, this would have gone against the electoral calculations of political parties for it would have meant talking of Aryans. of Hinduism, of Shiv, of Durga, of Shivaji and of Rana Pratap. This would have angered a substantial number of people, especially Muslims, and would have cost the politicians their vote-banks.' Linking the question of the Aryan homeland to Indianness or Hinduism and its gods and goddesses and to some historical characters means that those who are not totally indigenous cannot be truly Indian. (It was this view of equating indigenous with truly Indian—the others being less Indians or non-Indian-that led the Congress government of Madhya Pradesh. under the pressure of Rajputs, to issue an order to blacken a paragraph in every copy of an NCERT textbook which referred to the theory that the Rajputs were the descendants of foreigners who had settled in India during the period 2nd centure B.C. to 6th century A.D.)

istorian R.C. Majumdar had traced the 'dusk' of Indian civilization to the 10th century and the 'long night' to the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate. The British colonial rule was merely a continuation of the 'long night', replacement of one foleign rule by another. The Sangh Parivar historians and the Education Minister of U.P. have extended its antiquity by 1500 years. The 'new dimensions for writing history textbooks' laid down by the national conference on Indian history include the following:

'There has been a proud tradition of Indian resistance from the time of Alexander's invasion on India till freedom from British slavery. Generally, appropriate importance has not been given to this resistance and its leaders. It seems necessary to

give thorough knowledge on this resistance and its leaders in their specific context and in the background of nationalism, national pride, national character, to develop in the minds of students the spirit to defend the integrity of our country and nation.' The 'demands in a nutshell' made in the memorandum circulated by the students' teachers' organizations of the Sangh Parivar have demanded 'teaching of complete and impartial History of India Freedom struggle against foreign invaders covering the last 2500 years' (sic). This freedom struggle is to include the freedom from Tipu Sultan (and, presumably, various others) which the British gave us. As the memorandum says: It was a God-send that Tipu was ousted and the regular Wodeyar line re-established.'

 $\mathbf{W}_{ ext{hile}}$  a thorough rewriting of ancient Indian history in the new perspective of the freedom struggle is yet to come (Indian version of ethnic cleansing', to begin with in textbooks?), a few minor changes in the textbook have already been made. A statement on Chanakya's efforts to see that entire Bharat is organized into one nation has been added. Three lines have been added in the section on Ashoka. They read: 'It is worth mentioning that in spite of such a large empire, Ashoka had got his edicts engraved only in one script (Brahmi) (sic) and one language (Pakti-Sanskrit) (sic). This symbolizes the national unity of that time.' (If the authors of this revision come to know that Ashoka had his inscriptions inscribed also in Kharosthi, Aramaic and even Greek, he would surely be damned for his unpatriotic act in the next edition of this book.)

The revision of references to Babur and the mosque has not been highlighted by the U.P. government in its publicity brochure on educational achievements. A para in the earlier version of the textbook entitled High School Itihas Bhag-2, which gave the impression that Babur was not intolerant in religious matters, has been deleted and two statements added in the section dealing with the religious policy of the Mughals. These statements read: 'Babur's local official Kirbaqi (ste) got a mosque

built at the demolished site of a temple in Ayodhya. Although this structure is disputed, even then Hindu people regard it a temple.' The restraint shown here is amazing. There is no reference to a Ram or even a Vishnu temple and none even to the act of demolition.

In the sections dealing with the freedom struggle (the one in the 20th century), additional materials have been provided on Subhas Chandra Bose and B.R. Ambedkar and more importantly, three pages have been added on Keshavrao Hedgewar, the founder of RSS. Much of the material on Hedgewar is on how he won the hearts of patriots and praise of national leaders. As has been stated earlier, no thorough rewriting of the earlier books has been done so far. However, a committee has already been set up to compile and publish books on history and culture.

Some idea of what the thoroughly revised or new textbooks would be like can be had from the textbooks which are used in Saraswati Shishu Mandirs, schools run by one of the organizations of the Sangh Parivar. Two textbooks which deal with the history of national resistance starting with Alexander's invasion are prescribed in classes IV and V in these schools. Both books deal, in highly provocative language, with the crushing defeats inflicted by Indians on all foreign invaders Alexander on-wards. Some of the facts' mentioned include the following: Prithviraj killed Mohammad Ghori and his dead body lay on Prithviraj's feet as if narrating the tale of his sins; Outb Minar was built by Samudra Gupta and its real name was Vishnu Stambha; India became an independent country under Peshwa Madhav Rao etcetera.

A few sentences which indicate the style of writing: 'Hundreds of villainous demons have looked towards our country with greedy eyes. Innumerable plunderers and invaders came here with their huge armies. Some had come boasting of being world conquerors but they were seen fleeing away. Some tried to establish their rule over entire Bharat but had to fight all their life. These helpless ones could not sleep in peace. Some determined to root out Hindu reli-

gion but they themselves were rooted out and thrown away....'

After this invaders came with a sword in one hand and the Ouran in the other. Innumerable Hindus were forced to become, Muslims on the point of the sword. This fight for freedom became a religious war. Numberless people sacrificed themselves for religion. We went on winning one battle after another. We never let foreign rulers establish themselves but we could not make our separated brethren Hindus again....' 'Lakhs of foreigners came during these thousands of years... but they all suffered humiliating defeat.... There were some whom we digested (swallowed). ....When we were disunited, we failed to recognize who was our own and who were foreigners, then we were not able to digest them. We were not able to digest even those who for some compulsion had separated from us. Mughals, Pathans and Christians are today some of those people.'

The kind of patriotism which is being preached through these books will create a generation of bigoted morons. The government of Madhya Pradesh has recently taken these schools out of the purview of the state educational authorities and the organization which runs these schools has been given the right to conduct its own examinations at the end of classes V and VIII.

In other respects, however, the Madhya Pradesh government seems to be lagging behind its counterpart in U.P. Its Higher Education Grants Commission alone seems to have brought out a new textbook—Bharat Ki Sanskritic Virasat-for undergraduate students. Indian culture. according to this book, is the world's most ancient and rich culture. The book highlights the 'fact' of Aryans being the original inhabitants of India though it is not quite sure whether Aryans and Dravidians are races or merely language groups. Interestingly, the author refers to Romila Thapar's article published in SEMINAR (364, December 1989) in which she had argued against the theory of the Aryan race to prove that the Aryans were the original inhabitants of India. He is, however, not able to make up his mind whether they were a race or a language group or something else. He includes Gonds, Bhils and Santhals among Dravidians.

There are certain other 'discoveries' about India's past which are being imposed on the study of other subjects also. In April 1992, a workshop was held in Allahabad to develop a curriculum in Vedic mathematics which has been made a compulsory part of the mathematics syllabus at the secondary stage. From next year, it is proposed to be made a compulsory subject in colleges of engineering.

Addressing this workshop, the Education Minister declared that whatever is very ancient for India, that precisely is most modern for the world'. A participant in this workshop stated that 'in reality the mathematics which is being taught the world over today is Vedic mathematics' and that the Vedic mathematics methodology is more useful and correct and easier than modern computers. It also, according to him, awakens national pride among students. The Education Minister in the national conference on Indian history informed the audience 'with authority' that no country in the world till today has been able to achieve in science and mathematics what India had achieved in ancient times.

The notions of India's past which the BJP governments are introducing in the school textbooks have always been integral to the ideology of Hindu communalism. Many such notions, though perhaps with less virulence and consistency, have always found a place in much of the textbook literature in the country in spite of the efforts made by the educational authorities, at least in principle, to eliminate them. What is being attempted now is to use the authority of the state to impose these notions on the educational system, and to subvert the legitimacy of history as a form of knowledge and make it the handmaid of communal propaganda. Efforts made in 1977 to withdraw secular historical writings from being used in schools were thwarted as a result of widespread protests by historians and others. Now the dominant mood seems to be one of despondency.

# A stinking marsh-pond

PURUSHOTTAM AGRAWAL

THE textbook implies compulsion; theoretically you are not free to ignore it. In our education system the textbook is the primary if not the only source of knowledge and wisdom. In such a system the content and orientation of various textbooks are of vital importance. The current controversy regarding the introduction of new textbooks in the BIP-ruled states of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh must not be seen only as a problem of determining the limits of the use or the abuse of textbooks by any ruling party. It is primarily a question of selfperception and definition. What kind of sense of heritage do we want to bequeath to our younger generation? And why? Obviously, these and other questions pertaining to heritage and history are rooted in the conflicts, struggles and perceptions of the present.

The exponents of 'Hinduva' claim that they are only trying to inculcate in the minds of students a sense of pride and belonging. Granted that this is a noble intention, but the question is: can any sense of pride and belonging be value-free? One ought to be proud of the achievements and democratizing tendencies implicit in one's cultural heritage, but can one be really

and morally proud of a continuing tradition of oppresiveness and exploitation? All heritages have conflicting traditions of oppression and its resistance. Which tradition one follows would depend on one's value system and the vision of the present and the future. In his famous novel Gora, Tagore had put the question quite succinctly. According to him, the choice in any social and cultural discourse is basically between values and attitudes conducive to the creation of a catholic society and a stifling structure.

The textbook under consideration here (Bharat ki Sanskritik Virasat) is compulsory reading for first year graduation students. Introduced in Madhya Pradesh, the book contains 10 chapters dealing with Indian culture, land and people, social structure, literature, religion and philosophy, arts, the freedom struggle and the Constitution, the influence of Indian culture on the world and finally, the contribution of Madhya Pradesh in the making of the 'great' Indian culture. That the book subscribes to the 'Hindutva' notion of culture is obvious not only from the material it uses, but also from what it excludes.

For instance, the entire heritage of medieval Bhakti literature is left out. Although in different contexts, some Bhakti poets are mentioned in passing, the Bhakti sensibility which had Rama as one of the most important points of reference, does not deserve even a single sentence. Similarly, they do not find anything worth mentioning in the history of Indian science, even in the supposedly golden ancient period. This neglect of both Bhakti and science is by no means an error or a slip. It is a natural manifestation of the Hindutva notion of culture.

The pedagogical message of the book is clear: all the symptoms of degeneration and decay in Indian heritage and society are the result of the ominous influence of Islam. Two axioms underlie the treatment of any topic or theme in the book. One, *Bharatiyata* is synonymous with brahmanical Hinduism. There has been no oppression, alienation, conflict and power struggle in Bharatiyata so understood.

But not even RSS could play ostrich to the extent of finding everything fine with this Bharatiyata as it manifests itself today. Here, the second axiom comes in handy. According to it, all oppressive practices like sati and untouchability, and the various forms of cultural and social stagnation are actually the result of the evil influence of Islam and the establishment of Muslim rule. This pedagogical message is by no means restricted to this book alone. It is the core of the pseudo-nationalist notion of culture which permeates the entire cultural and political discourse of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bharatiya Janata Party.

The strategy behind the introduction of this and other similar text-books is quite clear. The objective is more than just the wish to transform BIP prejudices into historical truths. They want the younger generation to internalize the communal and fascist prejudices of the BIP as cultural deposits or moral-value assumptions (sanskaras). These sanskaras should influence the individual's socio-political behaviour throughout his life. This aim achieved, membership of a pseudo-nationalist party would then become

irrelevant. One thus becomes party to oppression and superstition. Both our intuitive sense of justice and our critical consciousness are sacrificed at the holy altar of putative 'nationalism'.

this pseudo-nationalist discourse heritage becomes a commodity outside culture, while culture itself becomes a static object ossified in some golden era of antiquity. The living, organic relationship with heritage is substituted by the worship of a hoary past. The dialectics of subject and object in the realm of cultural experience degenerates into a stagnant and false pride. 'Culture'. like 'nation', becomes so mystified that it cannot be subjected to any critical enquiry. It literally becomes an area of darkness. To use a Tagorian metaphor, 'the living flow of Ganga degenerates into a marsh-pond'. This is precisely what the BJP-wallahs would like the Indian heritage to become: a stinking marshpondl

It is in the context of this reifleation of culture and heritage that the disgusting absurdities of this particular book become somewhat understandable. The book is interesting at least from the point of view that it gives a fairly clear idea of the BJP's notion of culture and heritage. They want the younger generation to be proud of the Indian heritage minus science and Bhakti, because both of these discourses are rooted in the spirit of enquiry. In the BJP's authoritarian notion of culture, this spirit is banished: any attempt at probing or questioning is forbidden. Those who dare ask questions, like Gargi, will end up with their heads broken either by the curse of Yajnavalkya, or by the mundane force of the Bajrang Dal.

All historical narratives are rooted in contemporary perceptions and prejudices. Their authenticity depends upon the measure of objectivity employed, and the nature of evidence presented in their support. But not so in the case of pseudonationalist lovers of heritage. Their sole obsession is to subjugate all history and heritage to their present-day political project, giving them the courage to rush in where angels would fear to tread. And in their

enthusiasm, they provide some genuinely hilarious moments in their narrative of heritage.

To take a few examples of the gems of pseudo-nationalist wisdom. Right in the beginning, we are informed that 'the tradition of worship of Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Pippal, river, sun and other nature gods has been continuing uninterrupted for at least 5,000 years' (p. 3). But when the Vedic gods from Varuna to Parjanya are introduced, the book makes no mention of Rama and Krishna (p. 49). The inclusion of Rama and Krishna among the nature gods is undoubtedly a brilliant contribution to our understanding of the Hindu pantheon and will gladden the hearts of all Rama-bhakta supporters of BIP! The authors assert quite smugly and without citing any source that the Vedas were 'written' (p. 3). Unfortunately, the Vedic rishis themselves were not so sure. They referred to their compositions as 'shrutis'.

To prove the indigenousness of Aryans is vitally important for BP's 'political project'. The book indulges in unabashed manipulation in this regard. The views of eminent historians are quoted out of context, a debatable proposition is presented as gospel truth. And, true to their 'culture', the authors conveniently omit even 'nationalist' scholars like Tilak and Dayananda Saraswati in this context. For they too, like the 'pseudo-secularists', believed that the Aryans were not the original inhabitants of this country.

Now, how can you be an Indian, (read Hindu) if you are not proud of the great institution of 'yajna'? After all, yajna is not just a ritual but a symbol of the divine scheme of universal welfare, in which dogs, shudras and insignificant insects are treated at par with one another. Here is a description of Bhoota-Yajna': A part of the offering is taken out before hand and fed to a dog, shudra, animals, birds and other insignificant insects' (p. 35). So in the cultural hierarchy suggested by these authors, even a dog enjoys a superior status over a shudra. The language itself betrays their conceptualization of Indian culture which is deeply anti-human and steeped in narrow-minded superstition. This immediately makes clear why this conceptualization had to exclude the probing and egalitarian discourse of the medieval Bhakti poets.

In the Hindutva notion, the Bhakti sensibility is important only inasmuch as it functions as an emotive restatement of scriptural wisdom. But the import of Bhakti literature lies precisely in the fact that it expands the horizons of traditional religious sensibility instead of only poetically restating it. In fact, the Bhakti literature epitomizes popular religiosity and its epistemology is rooted in the experiences of ordinary people.

Secondly, Bhakti poetry developed after the advent of Islam and as the worthy exponents of Hindutva would have us believe, the contribution of Islam has only been negative. The book unambiguously asserts 'that the circumstances over the last one thousand years have led to the diminishing of the original cultural flexibility of India. The reason for this is not any internal weakness but a natural reaction to social and political events' (p. 4). Thus only the Islamic invasion is to be blamed for any oppressive facets of Indian (read Hindu) way of life. 'The ancient period,' the book informs us, was dominantly spiritualistic and it was the golden age of Indian society' (p. 42). (Incidentally, to call Indian society 'spiritualistic' was symptomatic of orientalistic scholarship and was sharply resented even by Hindu nationalists like Tilak and Savarkar.)

Anyway, in this 'golden ago' everything was humane and ideal. It was after foreign invasions assaulted the cultural identity of India, that the open Varna-Vyavastha gave way to a restrictive caste system, and priestly ritualism and superstition took root in the society. The Dharma-Shastras and Smritis transformed Indian society: a great and open society was converted into a closed one. Women were deprived of their freedom... Sahadharmacharini was forced into the status of a dasi... the practice of sati started... untouchability was practised; as a result of which a whole social class was subjected to oppression and atrocities' (pp. 42-43). As is obvious from this description, Islam is the arch-villain of Indian society. So much so that while the noble Hindu kings conscientiously encouraged the dance forms, 'the Muslim rulers took dance only as a means of entertainment and reduced it to a court form' (p. 63).

This obsession with Islam would have been hilarious had it been rooted in simple ignorance. But this is not so. Not only in this book but in the entire discourse of pseudonationalism, the assigned role of Islam as a whipping-boy is crucial. In fact, the hatred of Islam and its Indian followers is nothing but a reflection of brahmanical contempt for the so-called lower castes. The reason is quite simple. Before Islam there was no conceivable escape for the wretched of the caste system. They could only criticize or satirize the Kafkaesque world of the caste system or could opt out of it by becoming 'bairagis' at the cost of sacrificing all family ties and social relations.

Lslam, for the first time in Indian history, offered an honourable alternative to those who were and are still considered equal to 'dogs, animals and other insignificant insects'. For this crime Islam was never forgiven. The book under discussion describes Islam as a simple religion devoid of any metaphysics' (p. 56). Obviously, Islam as a system is incapable of sophisticated reasoning and the Muslims as a people are bound to be impulsive simpletons. Islam seems to constantly evoke in the minds of pseudo-nationalists a response of pathetic fear and hatred.

In fact, the role of Islam has been both complex and multi-faceted. While as a theoretically egalitarian religion it offered solace to ordinary people, at the same time, like any other religion, it also served as a rationalization of oppressive systems and institutions. The pseudonationalist gloss over this complexity. The struggle for hegemony and the position of Islam vis-a-vis this struggle has been ignored in secularist historiography as well.

But the pseudo-nationalist discourse kills two birds with a single stone. On the one hand, it locates the internal enemy of Indian society in Islam and, on the other, it seeks to direct the anguish and anger of dalits, tribals and women towards Islam and Indian Muslims. While putting the blame for the practice of untouchability at the door of Islam, it is conveniently forgotten that Manu-Smriti was composed between 200 B.C. and 300 A.D., i.e. four centuries before the emergence of Islam. Manu goes to the extent of saying that a dead brahman should not be carried by a shudra because if the latter defiled the burnt offering by his touch the deceased will not reach heaven (Manu V/104).

Lt is unnecessary to cite from the notoriously horrible code of punishments laid down by Manu. He categorically considers women and shudras as the most impure sections of human society (Manu XI/224). He unambiguously states that 'even a brahman who subsists merely by the name of his caste can interpret the law, but a shudra can never be appointed as judge (Dharma-Pravartaka)' (ibid, VIII/20). He warns that the kingdom of that monarch who looks on while a shudra settles the law will sink low like a cow in the morass (tbid.  $V\Pi/z1$ ). It is not only a matter of implicit understanding but of explicit injunctions (not just in Manu but in various Smritis) that shudras and women had no right whatsoever to know the law by which they were governed. So much for the open and mobile Varna-Vyavastha before the 'evil influence' of Islam!

It is an incontrovertible fact that Manu's vision of society was that of a hierarchical exploitative order in which each person had an assigned place, assigned not through consensus or a dynamic social process but by an alliance of the powerful. Manu-Smriti is normative in orientation but it is also indicative of a ruling alliance becoming more and more inhuman in the pursuit of power. Any sense of 'heritage' has to locate itself in this context. The agenda, even today, is power to the oppressed-of which Manu was mortally afraid. As are his pseudo-nationalist progenies. But Manu was forthright about this; pseudos being pseudos, are masters of distortion and deception.

This deception is not only perfidious to any authentic notion of culture but is also harmful to the Hindu community itself. Lack of critical self-awareness both causes and reflects a myopic self-perception. It contributes greatly in curtailing the life-giving flow of cultural heritage into a quagmire from which any community—ethnic, cultural or political—would find it difficult to extricate itself.

The moral of the pseudo-nationalist cultural discourse is palpable. Culture is not a living flow, it is only an uncritical glorification of a selective past. Heritage is only a commodity which is to be used for petty political gains and also for creating cultural deposits conducive to the spread of mass hatred against the other so that the critical selfawareness does not grow. In this scheme, the sense of belonging to heritage results not in enlightenment but in obfuscation. As the swan in the panchatantra story realized, that to the owls, noon is very dark and they prefer it that way!

But there is a moral for democratic and sensitive souls as well. The English-speaking elite, which has no cultural moorings in this country, deserve the punishment which the Advanis and Malkanis are inflicting upon its political and cultural discourse. The liberal intelligentsia dares not challenge it with any degree of cultural certainty and profundity because it never bothered itself with the problem of rooting itself in the cultural experiences of ordinary people. It enjoys, at best, a 'guest-status' so far as the discourse on culture is concerned.

The book poses a challenge: is it sufficient to condemn and ridicule such absurdities or is something more called for? The real task is to engage in a search for authentic notions of Indianness, and to intervene in the discourse of culture with a sense of cultural rootedness, and that in the languages of the Indian people rather than in English, the lingua-franca of the Indian elite. Only then will it be possible to have an organic relationship with Indian society and heritage and thus liberate culture and heritage from the quagmire of pseudo-nationalism.

## Ideology and pedagogy

RASHMI PALIWAL & C.M. SUBRAMANIAM

SOCIAL science teaching has long been seen as a means of inculcating this or that ideology or value system. Nationalism, secularism, socialism, communalism, feminism and many new issues that keep emerging have competed for a place in social science teaching. Interestingly the changes that concern for ideology has brought about in any textbook are very few, very marginal, albeit otherwise significant. They would barely cover half a dozen pages of the book in question, if not just half a dozen lines. The large part of the textbook remains almost unchanged and untouched. However, these changes are made with much fanfare and evoke much frenzy.

This is sad because the few glances people throw towards textbooks are so completely entangled in those half a dozen pages or lines, that the mass of matter in the remaining scores and scores of pages is never looked at with similar concern. While the role of ideology cannot be negated or ignored, particularly in social science teaching, we need to realize that this preoccupation with ideology has impeded the development of the pedagogy of social science teaching.

<sup>\*</sup>This article is based on the experience of developing alternative textbooks in social sciences for the middle schools of Madhya Pradesh. These textbooks are being developed as part of an experimental programme run by the Eklavya group in collaboration with the Education Department of the government. The programme has been running in eight schools of Madhya Pradesh since 1986.

Postscript: As we go to press, the BJP government of Madhya Pradesh has issued orders to close the social studies programme of Eklavya.

Way back in 1982, when we began our work in social science textbook development, we primarily wanted to address the issue of developing intellectual skills and conceptual faculties in children. For us, these were very important goals of education. In the course of our work we often encountered the problem of ideology. Once again today, ideology and textbook writing as an issue of national importance has come centre-stage being part of a throbbing political scenario. However, there are some dimensions of this issue that do not necessarily emerge from organized or politicized quarters. These dimensions also have a great bearing on textbook writing, and need a closer look.

A village schoolteacher once accosted us on the road and said: 'Whatever you do, please explain and eleborate the chapters of the textbooks. It is impossible to understand anything from them. Every single sentence of these books is like a sutra, and requires 8 to 10 sentences from our side for explanation. Very often we don't know what or how to explain.' That was his way of saying that the chapters do not aid in developing images or concepts in the minds of children or, in other words, developing understanding. What the textbooks do is to enshrine the quiz notion of knowledge. Bombarding children with a myriad separate and independent facts is the objective behind their design and presentation.

It is obviously impossible to explain and eleborate all those facts and their linkages and yet make a textbook viable within the school time-table. Nor is that a relevant enterprise from the point of view exteaching any subject. A subject is not the mass of information it conveys. It is a way of looking at things, a way of examining and understanding. It is this that needs to be taught—with the help of topics and issues that are appropriate for the purpose.

Let us explain briefly how we tried to do this in history. For us the purpose of teaching history was:

\*Make children study changes in society;

- \*Make them aware of connections, relationships and causations amongst various social factors;
- \*Make them understand the role of personalities through the social context of their times;
- \*Make children recognize the impact of historical processes on their lives today;
- \*Make them aware of the critical method used by historians to reconstruct past events;
- \*Introduce them to the problem of forming opinions and judgements on the basis of the views and evidence of others.

We chose topics or subjects that helped us design chapters for meeting these objectives. For the sake of convenience and familiarity, we worked within the syllabus prescribed by the Government Board, but modified the weightage and presentation of different topics to enable us to teach the basic features of historical understanding effectively.

Yet the most crucial determinant of our textbook design was the level of the children we were dealing with. They needed concrete, detailed, vivid descriptive material to form images of life in the past. Only then could they comprehend, compare, study changes, and understand causes and linkages. This need for concreteness and detail often made us adopt the story style of presentation. Yes, the chapters did become long, but they also became interesting and easy to understand.

We trimmed out many sundry topics because it was no point just mentioning them like a formality. Through this process we arrived at a book well within the syllabus, but new in its approach, emphasis and goals. The capping stone of the endeavour was a system of open book evaluation which focused on testing skills and understanding. However, did people perceive our effort as being pedagogical and not ideological?

We had long discussions and debates with the teachers concerned, analyzing the textbook with them. They were hugely relieved to see hands shoot up in the class to answer questions in the course of the chapters. The kids were relating well to the material and were lively, talkative and responsive in class—good enough reason for teachers to feel pleased and relieved and relaxed.

Yet, something was amiss. They were disturbed by the absence of familiar ideological signposts. They asked us: 'But why haven't you called Samudra Gupta 'Great'? Why haven't you mentioned the 'Golden' Age? Even Akbar—you haven't called him 'Great'. Why haven't you said that Aurangzeb's religious policy led to the downfall of the Mughal empire? That the Vedas are the repositories of all knowledge in the world? The previous textbooks had all these things.'

Our answer was that superlatives like great, golden and glorious are matters of judgement. What we have to learn is how to analyze, under-stand and assess situations and people, how to compare and contrast them with others. At the end of it we can arrive at our own judgement, our own preferences. We told them that there was no point in taking other peoples' judgements at face value. They got the message, but it took some swallowing. After some time they would come back to it. But you must call someone great. It's important to portray someone, something as an ideal before children. Children need something to look up to and emulate.'

Perhaps they have a point particularly as even traditional heroes like Akbar are not portrayed as heroes since the chapter focuses on analyzing their realpolitik. Conversely, of course, Aurangzeb does not become a villain. Frankly, creating heroes and villains is not something we could view as a legitimate task of teaching history. That surely, lies in the domain either of literature or of politics. However, history as a discipline has yet to establish its distinct and legitimate identity among the various scientific ways of pursuing knowledge. In the popular mind, and in a large part of the scholarly world too, history has much more to do with sentiment than with science. Hence there is no

question of keeping a certain overt ideology in abeyance. Its absence in our books was therefore disturbing and puzzling.

Often people do not even read the textbook and yet launch a tirade on our ideological ghost. There is a certain frenzy in the atmosphere about matters related to textbooks and history. In this atmosphere it is quite an uphill task to even begin communicating on the methodological and pedagogical aspects of the textbooks we have developed. A typical conversation in the context of a lesson on the Turkish conquest with an official of the Education Department goes thus:

You don't say that the Turks destroyed the temples—that they converted people on the point of the sword.'

'But we have said this in the chapter on the Turkish conquest.'

'No no no—you do not write the truth. You just write a few lines and forget the matter.' (In other words stating the truth is not enough—one must blow its trumpet too.)

'You see, the chapter focuses on giving children an exercise in evaluating the opinion of different historians on the reasons of Turkish success. Since that is the focus...'

'Children can't go so deep. They are not capable of doing the serious tasks you are giving them at this age. Have you any child psychologist or qualified educationist on your team? You must judge properly the level of the children. They need to be told only the broad facts. But the English have distorted all facts in the research they have done. And all these historians follow in their footsteps...'

Note the point: children can't go deep into any matter. But of course they should be armed with all the broad facts with the deepest ideological meanings. In other words, methodology is too deep for them whereas ideology is not.

It is therefore quite clear that a demand for an ideologically oriented textbook is often made in the name

of children. But what of the children? How have they responded? What about their sentimental or emotional needs? Take, for example, the chapter on agrarian conditions in Mughal times. The issues being discussed were how cash revenue demands facilitated commercialization of crops, how that in turn added to the indebtedness of farmers, and how indebted farmers took recourse to migration in order to escape and survive. All along there were questions comparing that situation with the current one. The emotional identification children felt with the farmers of hundreds of years ago was all too visible. It was touching to see them so moved and involved.

Ur take our chapter on Akbar. It examines the fluctuations in Akbar's religious policy in relation to his court politics. The children find this chapter gripping. They narrate back all the clever twists and turns of the redoubtable monarch's policies and actions with great mirth and understanding. They don't seem to mind at all that he has not been portrayed as an ideal. They understand, with fair seriousness, what he needed to do and why. It's the world of realpolitik—many elements of which they see and experience in their own world too. Somehow, the chapter whets their appetite for understanding what makes the world tick. There is a sense of gleeful satisfaction.

Many such experiences in the classrooms have left us with a strange conclusion: children like the fact that they are being treated with seriousness, that they are being given deep and real matters to understand and explain. Perhaps a greater emotional need of theirs is being satisfied in this way. It is the adults who think that only the broad, the superficial, the brief... the sermonized and the ideologized is appropriate for children. No doubt, they have their reasons for believing this.

There is a certain danger in examining real situations deeply. For, in the last analysis, what is the chapter legitimizing? Quite a few teachers have repeatedly expressed grave discomfort at leaving a problem as a problem. If the chapter on panchayats gives some examples of the

actual functioning of the panchayat system, it will obviously not paint a rosy picture. They don't mind that, but insist that some example of a good panchayat (for there must be some good ones somewhere) must be given lest the chapter has a negative impact on tender minds.

If the chapter on farmers and labourers describes various categories of the agricultural community and shows how different categories have made use of the new agricultural technologies, it will naturally touch upon the problems of indebtedness, unemployment and low returns for small and marginal farmers. What is wrong with that? 'Nothing,' we are told. 'Only you must say how the government is trying to solve these problems or what people can do on their own to alleviate their difficulties. Because if you don't do this and leave the chapter at an examination of problems-it will give children ideas inciting rebellion and revolt. You see, you shouldn't try to push your ideology through textbooks!'

Needless to say, legitimizing the state and the status quo is not viewed as peddling an ideology at all. A textbook is an organ of the state, and must, therefore, naturally and actively propagate the basic and essential ideology of the state. Then where does the sanctity of the autonomous pursuit of knowledge stand in relation to the government textbooks? This problem pursued us doggedly in most of the civics chapters we developed, particularly because they deal with current politics and economics. These matters are very close and relevant to the lives of children.

In fact, how to handle the ideology of the state and the existing social order seemed a more pervasive problem in alternative textbook development. For many children, it matters little who came from where in the hoary past. But it does matter whether the textbook allows them a genuine entry into the hard, real world people have lived in, or whether it keeps the portals of understanding veiled (if not halfclosed) with glorifications, legitimizations, idealizations and mystifications.

## Denationalizing textbooks

ADIL TYABJI

THE current controversy over textbook publishing in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh provides an occasion to re-examine one of the most emotive and vexed subjects among book publishers and their associations—the nationalization of school textbooks in all governmentrun, controlled or aided schools, representing about 98% of all the schools in the country. What were the purposes of nationalization, how far have they been served, and is there a case for reconsideration? Ironically in the context of the current controversy, nationalization of school textbooks first began in a small way in U.P. when the Congress captured power there prior to independence. But the policy of phased nationalization of all textbooks used in government or government-aided schools really came into its own soon after independence, gained momentum in the 1960s and was all but total a decade later.

The policy of nationalization was thus conceived of in the halcyon pre- and early post-independence days when the Congress party and Nehruvian socialism were unchallenged. When dreams ran high of a self-confident, secular India, united in purpose, with democratic institutions, embodying the best elements of capitalism and socialism, showing the way to economic self-reliance and prosperity to the rest of the decolonizing/newly decolonized world in Asia and Africa.

The welfare state par excellence would introduce free compulsory education at all levels and as the basis for that provide good, inexpensive textbooks of uniform quality and content throughout the country. Textbooks would serve as a basis for uniting the diverse regions and religious groupings in India. This at a time when there was no real

indigenous publishing tradition in India and school textbooks were the monopoly of a few offshoots of principally British publishing houses established in the early 20th century. They provided textbooks which, though generally of high quality, had all too frequently been written for English students and therefore, in social, linguistic, historical, geographical, and political content and methodology were unsuitable for Indian students.

The aims and goals of nationalization were thus in theory laudable, though even here there were costs to be paid. Independence witnessed a mushroom-growth of small publishers, undercapitalized, lacking in tradition, skills and inspiration, with an eye on the main chance of the enormous potential school and library market. Had the school market remained open, the huge resources emanating from educational publishing would have fostered the growth of a strong indigenous publishing industry as local publishers competed for a market share with the established Indian branches of British companies. These had professional expertise built up through imported traditions and adapted to the Indian environment over three or four decades, and employed Indian personnel in increasingly senior posi-tions. The demonstration effect, as it were, would have rubbed off.

Nationalization put a break on such developments and to this day there are hundreds of undercapitalized publishing units lacking even the most elementary norms of quality and professionalism, let alone ethics, in what might otherwise have been a flourishing and professional industry. It is a credit to the resilience of the book publishing sector that even deprived of the most lucra-

tive publishing area by far, it has grown remarkably quickly, to join the 10 largest publishing countries in the world in terms of output and developed substantially, albeit unevenly, in skills and professionalism.

he nationalization of textbooks failed to meet its laudable objectives for a number of reasons. The most important perhaps is that books cannot be produced and marketed like potatoes, quality and demand ensured by tested strains, fertile soil backed up with adequate application of composts, fertilizers and pesticides, availability of irrigation, efficient promotional and distribution services, and the like. Though a number of very large publishing houses exist in various parts of the world, book publishing (including textbook publishing) is essentially a smallscale activity.

Even in large publishing houses, the creation of books is split up into relatively small functional units with their own identity and esprit. This creates the conditions where teamwork, enthusiasm, knowledge and 'feel' for particular kinds of books have full play, pride in the product and competitive spirit (vis-a-vis other publishers' books), and the requisite degree of specialization are fostered. Government or government-led institutions, unwieldy and grandiose in structure and aims, overmanned, bound by layers of rules, compartmentalized, and frequently afflicted by a lack of sense of vocation and teamwork, are singularly ill-equipped to fit this profile. Besides, where no competition exists and books are force-fed into a captive market, how is the motivation to learn, innovate, devise alternative formulations and methodologies, study developments elsewhere... to be generated? Where books are devised, produced, and marketed by a multiplicity of large interlocking organizations, how can the operation be imbued with that quality of individual involvement, innovation and stamp which are the hallmarks of creative publishing?

As its name suggests, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), a wing of the National Institute of Education (in turn the academic wing of the Ministry of Education) was created with the

again, laudable aim of researching teaching methodology suitable for India, textbook research and development of model textbooks, teacher training and curriculum development. Had it restricted itself to even this already quite formidable portfolio, with its very considerable resources and prestige it could have developed an unquestioned expertise in these areas, setting standards for a developing private industry to emulate. Instead it was saddled with the task of publishing textbooks in all subjects for over 98% of the millions of school-going in India in English, Hindi, Sanskrit, and Urdu. State Textbook Bureaus were created to produce regional-language variants at the state level independently of it.

In such a situation is it possible to maintain a continuity of methodology, subject, uniformity of quality, balance and style? No one author or even a compatible and compact team of authors can achieve it in a limited time-frame. So you have perforce to recourse to dozens of individual authors with varying abilities, styles and approach. The only connecting link then is that irreducible minimum, the syllabus, which must be covered at all costs. That the books have been produced in these circumstances for so many years is a formidable organizational achievement, notwithstanding complaints of often poor content, low production values, delays, and distribution bottlenecks. But is this a satisfactory way of inculcating that oft repeated phrase, the reading habit' and taking education beyond a rote bypass of the examination hurdle? I have serious misgivings.

Then there is that other question of 'inexpensive'. Are these textbooks really as inexpensive as their price tags suggest? Book publishing in India is a lean and low profile activity. Few glittering parties, no TV ads, scarcely any advertising in the print media. We operate in an economy of scarcity and books, apart of course from essential textbooks, are very low priority on the average family budget. Cutting frills and prices to the minimum for trade books and books for the young is as natural for the publisher as brushing his teeth. Nationalized textbooks are inexpensive by comparison because they carry a heavy element of subsidy. Establishment costs and overheads (as is well known, exceptionally high in government organizations) do not enter into pricing, paper is indented from the mills at special quota prices, no profits need be made, and losses are benignly tolerated. No, government textbooks are not really as inexpensive as it would appear. Given a percentage of the social cost incurred, private publishers could be more than competitive in this area.

So much for good and inexpensive textbooks of uniform quality. The other major goal of nationalization was the use of textbooks as a basis for uniting the diverse regions and religious groupings in the country. The fatal flaw was declaring education to be a state subject under the Constitution. The reasoning behind this was that in a diverse and multicultural society like India, education needed to be attuned to local needs and regional variations.

L he frailties of this argument and the dangers that loomed ahead were not apparent as long as the consensus on secularism and unity remained intact in the post-independence euphoria and as long as the Congress retained its monolithic presence at the centre and in the states. The centre was in a position to design the overarching framework. leaving the states to embroider in the variations to suit local and regional conditions. With the weakening of the centre vis-a-vis the states and with non-Congress governments in power in many of them, education, and along with it textbooks, became yet another pawn in the political game.

As the first salvo, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) flexed Tamil muscles in the south. English was abolished as a compulsory subject at the primary and secondary levels in Gujarat for well over a decade, leaving a majority of Gujarati schoolchildren virtually unemployable outside the state. An analogous situation continues to prevail in M.P. and U.P. with regard to Hindi.

It is not my intention to get mired here in a discussion of the merits and demerits of the vexed English versus Hindi versus regional language controversy nor of the two or three language formulae. My reference to the problem is merely to point out that denigrating education as a state subject has made it extremely vulnerable to politics and the temporary whims of an (often temporary) bunch of politicians with a populist agenda. Whatever the policy, there should obviously be a single broad policy for the country as a whole, else the future of millions of young people may be jeopardized by ill-conceived schemes, not thoroughly thought through, for temporary advantage.

Gujarati in Gujarat and Assamese in Assam may be very emotive vote-pullers in the respective states in the heat and excitement of the moment, or in state-centre one-upmanship. But how many state governments with hair-breadth majorities can be relied upon to pause and" think of the employment potential of their respective states and of the fate of the young people who step out of them for employment opportunities? And in any case, what of that used and misused yet increasingly relevant catch phrase 'emotional integration? How potent a tool for divisiveness and mischief education as a state subject can be may be imagined on a micro-scale in terms of the antics of the Shiv Sainiks in Maharashtra and actually seen in practice on a more macro one in the current Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) assay into scholasticism in Madhya Pradesh and U.P.

Not that education as a central or joint subject is any guarantee of immunity against politicization. BP's manipulation of postings to key positions in education, discouragement of the acquisition of any post-Gupta history by libraries, and reported attempts at destruction of manuscripts pertaining to the medieval period during its (happily) short-lived tenure in the post-Emergency Janata Dal coalition is testimony to that

It can, however, act as a check, and there is little doubt that the central government, more sharply in the national spotlight, tends to act with far greater maturity and allIndia perspective than state governments are likely to do. One can only pray (will god hear?!) that the maturity of the Indian people acting in concert does not permit reactionary, neo-fascist parties into power at the centre. But then education remains and will continue to be a state subject, government agencies will continue to publish textbooks, and therein lies the rub!

With all its failings, nationalization of school textbooks has been with us for over 30 years and perhaps it is too much to expect it to wither away. Associated with the operations of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), there is true to tradition (of government organizations) a vast network of supporting organizational infrastructure at state level such as the State Boards of Education. Contres for Educational Research and Training (SCERTS) and NCERT field offices in all state capitals, District Institutes of Education, District Education Officers, and the like which are unlikely to become redundant but whose structure, responsibilities and functioning under a new dispensation would entail substantial change.

Llow resistant government organizations, with their established networks of patronage and graft, are to restructuring is well known. Yet change is in the air. Who could have suspected 30 years ago, or even very recently, that public sector units were expected to turn a profit or face privatization, that one day even the commanding heights would be under siege. However, it took the threat of imminent national financial bankruptcy to bring that miracle about, and bankruptcy in textbooks and textbook policy is not something that anyone loses much sleep over. or attracts the attention of such august bodies as the World Bank.

In the event of such a miracle occurring, the NCRRT should restrict itself to the role originally envisaged for it, namely teacher-training, formulation of national syllabi, research into teaching methodology and textbook development at the national level and SCERTs/State Boards of Education at the state level. Publishing textbooks on the NCERT/CRSE

syllabi should be in the hands of private publishers, leaving it to individual schools to decide which they want to use, as is the case with ICSE courses. To protect standards, there should be a national/state textbook council composed of NCERT/SCERT experts and eminent educationists/subject specialists to certify that textbooks submitted by individual publishers adequately cover the syllabi and meet the requisite standards.

Such certification should be the only thing fettering individual schools' choice of books. It is after all the wearer who really knows which shoe fits and which shoe pinches. The competition this would generate would (a) ensure quality both in layout, content and produc-tion values; (b) encourage and, indeed, demand constant innovation within the limits of course content and around it in terms of supplementary material, teacher's aids etcetera; (c) generate enormous financial resources for the publishing sector, enabling publishers to invest in long-term author resources for much needed development of Indiaoriented lexical and non-lexical reference projects in English, Hindi, and the regional languages and into and out of each other, major multiauthor tertiary-level textbooks and the like; and (d) entail the most competitive pricing, in which they could be aided by the government by the supply of printing paper (probably the most expensive in the world) at controlled rates for certified textbooks.

Indian publishers would really come of age, have an opportunity to develop greater professionalism, be in a position to do justice to India's enormous authorship potential, and earn far more foreign exchange than they consume (through imports). The government would be able to streamline the unwieldy. duplication of institutional framework; cut down on waste and avoid much well-deserved flak! The consumer would have the cheapest and the best, and most importantly, the widest choice. Happiness all round! Except of course for the patronage and pay-for-no-work seekers of the present state monoply textbook publishing infrastructure.

## Knowledge design in Vedic and post-Vedic thought

HARESH LALVANI

KNOWLEDGE design is an important contribution of the Vedic and post-Vedic thinkers of India. In an effort to make sense of the physical and metaphysical worlds, the ancient thinkers, in some instances, used morphological techniques to organize their physical and metaphysical worlds. This worldview encompassed areas as diverse as metaphysics, philosophy, religion, astronomy, mathematics, architecture, polity, dance and medicine. The key thrust of all this enormous effort at organizing, cataloguing and systematizing information was to determine the fundamental units which combined with one another to generate the wide complexity of perceived and conceived phenomena. Thus the attempt was to identify basic morphological units of knowledge which gave rise to the enormous diversity of form, phenomena, process, experience and behaviour in the real world. The results are documented in various written texts.

A quick morphological survey of a sample selection of these texts makes it clear that there were four distinct classes of knowledge systems used in the past. These resulted from an interplay between form and structure. The most primitive system has neither form nor structure. There are two intermediate classes, one having structure and no form, and the other having form and no structure. The highest class has both form and structure. These four classes are generic classes and apply to all cultures and to contemporary societies in the East and the West. The ancient designers of knowledge in India used these morphological techniques to varying degrees, first one extensively, the second and the third less frequently, and the fourth one in at least one instance from a much later period. Examples are given for each followed by some remarks on their relevance for India today.

1960 4

The no form no structure system was used extensively through Vedic and post-Vedic literature as exemplified by the straightforward listing of categories of things, e.g.

<sup>\*</sup>Fig. 1 is taken from Ref. 6, Figs. 2 and 3 were first published in Ref. 3, and Figs. 4-6 were computer-generated by Neil Katz of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, New York.

tridosa (three dispositions), panchbhuta (five elements) and navrasa (nine emotions), and relied on the formal use of number as a cataloguing device. There is no concern regarding the structural relation between the entities themselves and it is not clear if the entities are irreducible to the most fundamental units. At this simplest of levels. number provided the most expedient device for classification in Vedic thought. The Rig Veda and later works like the Upanishads provide numerous instances of the use of number as a cataloguing device (Hopkins, 1894; Lakhtakia, 1992). Consider the following examples showing the morphological use of the numbers 3, 5 and 8:

Aswins, thrice bestow upon us riches: thrice approach the divine rite: thrice preserve our intellects: thrice grant us prosperity: thrice food. The daughter of the sun has ascended your three-wheeled car.

Rig Veda (1, 3, 4, 5)

Having dwelt on this (fivefold arrangement of the worlds, the

gods, beings, breathings, senses, and elements of the body); a Rishi said: 'Whatever exists is fivefold (pankta)'.

Taittireya Upanishad (1, 7, 1)

These are the eight abodes (the earth, & c.), the eight worlds (fire, & c.), the eight gods (the immortal food, & c.), the eight persons (the corporeal, & c.).

Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad (III, 9, 26)

**I** he systems with form but no structure are exemplified by various architectural plans of temples catalogued in the Shilpashastras. The upapitha plan based on a 5x5 grid and composed of 25 squares, for example, is used to allocate 25 deities, one for each square (Fig. 1). Similarly, the 8x8 grid comprising 64 squares, as in the Vastupurusha mandala, allocated 64 deities. Such a system has a geometric form defined by the square grid, but the relationship between all the deities do not seem to be organized according to a unifying ordering principle which corresponds to the grid.

ĪŚA ADITI MARUT MUKHYA SOMA **ŚOSHA** RUDRA BHŪDHARA APAVATSA **JAYANTA** ĀRYAKA ĀDITYA VARUNA MITRA BRAHMĀ BHRIŚA SUGRĪVA INDRA VIVASVAT SAVITRA BHRINGA-AGNI PITRI YAMA VITATHA -RĀJA

Figure 1

Consider another example, dealing with the laying of bricks for constructing altars (Fig. 2; Lalvani, 1992):

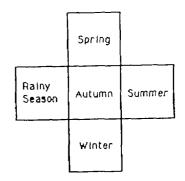


Figure 2

This fire (the Garhapatya-fire) with five bricks is the year. And its five bricks are spring, summer, rainy season, autumn, winter; and by them the fire has a head, two sides, a centre, and a tail.

Maitrayana-Brahmana Upanishad (VI, 33)

Here the five seasons, which are related in a cyclical manner, do not correspond to the arrangement of the five bricks which have one predominant centre.

Examples of knowledge systems with structure and no form are based on the mathematical concepts of permutations and combinations. Here the simple use of number is replaced by numbers having a mathematical structure. Permutations and combinations were known in ancient India (Chakravarty, 1932), and Pingala's Chandashutra (before 200 B.C.), the Ayurvedic medical works Charakasamhita and Susrutasamhita (200 B.C.) and the Jain Bhagvati-Sutra (300 B.C.) are cited as early source texts. These mathematical techniques were used by ancient thinkers to organize a variety of physical and metaphysical entities. The conceptual aim was to use a few generators from which a large variety of possibilities could be produced, thus deriving many from few. This is an age-old effort to describe the world in terms of fewer and fewer unifying principles, a practice undertaken by modern science.

Consider the following three examples (Chakravarti, 1932): All combinations of laghu (short) and guru (long) metres in the Vedic chanda (metres) used in poetic compositions (based on Pingala's Chandahsutra), all perfumes derived from the combinations of 16 substances taken in one, two, three or four proportions (based on Varahamihira's Brhat Samhita), 63 tastes from six basic tastes (based on Caraka Samhita, 26, 14-23). Another example is that of 729 types of sexual unions based on three Dimensions each (of organs) of males and females engaged in all possible unions of three Intensities and three Durations (based on Vatsayana's Kamasutra).

A he example of the syllabic construction of Vedic metres is noteworthy in its structure. The types of metres are described in terms of number of syllables within a metre: Ukta with one syllable, Atvukta with two syllables, Madhya with three syllables, Pratistha with four syllables, Supratistha with five syllables, Gayatri with six syllables, and so on. Each type consists of all combinations of short and long (or light and heavy) syllables. The Natyashastra, for example, describes the combinations of syllables in each of the first 26 types of metres:

[Possible] metrical patterns of the Gayatri [type] are sixty-four, of the Usnik one hundred and twenty-eight, of the Anustup two hundred and fifty-six, of the Brhati five hundred and twelve, of the Pankti one thousand and twenty-four, of the Tristup two thousand and forty-eight, of the Jagati four thousand and ninety-two... of the Utkrti six crores seventy-one lacs eight thousand eight hundred and sixty-four.

Natyashastra (XV, 37, 51-76)

Note that the above numbers are part of the series 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512, 1024, 2048, 4092, ... 67108864 and correspond to the power series with base 2. This series is  $2^0$ ,  $2^1$ ,  $2^3$ ,  $2^3$ ,  $2^4$ ,  $2^5$ ,  $2^6$ ,  $2^7$ ,  $2^8$ ,  $2^9$ ,  $2^{10}$  ...  $2^{26}$ , where the power indicates the number of entities being combined. For example, consider the number 8 which equals  $2^8$ . This corresponds to the eight *Madhya* metres which consist of all

combinations of short and long syllables taken three at a time. Natyashastra (XV, 77, 83-84), for example, describes these eight trikas (triads) of the Madhya metre as follows:

bha-gana — heavy, light, light
ma-gana — heavy, heavy, heavy
ja-gana — light, heavy, light
sa-gana — light, light, heavy
ra-gana — heavy, light, heavy
ta-gana — heavy, heavy, light
ya-gana — light, heavy, heavy
na-gana — light, light, light

To take another example, all combinations of six things equal 2° or 64 possibilities. This particular example of the use of number 64 corresponds to 64 hexagrams in the I-Ching, the Chinese book of changes, where each hexagram is composed of six parts from a combination of two things, yin and yang. The Chinese hexagrams are also an example of a base two system, like the Vedic system of chandas, but the latter is more inclusive and not restricted to the number six like the I-Ching. It includes all combinations of things based on all numbers ranging between 1 and 26, with a number like 64 providing one instance in this series of numbers.

nowledge systems having both form and structure provide the most sophisticated morphology. Such systems use a geometric representation to diagram the possibilities and their inter-relationships. In some cases, these diagrams are implied, in other cases they are explicitly described. An example of each is given. Consider the following excerpt from the Upanishads which shows the knowledge of the x-y-z axes, and the associated diagram in Figure 3 which is implied:

His Eastern quarter are the pranas which go to the East;
His Southern quarter are the pranas which go to the South;
His Western quarter are the pranas which go to the West;
His Northern quarter are the pranas which go to the North;
His Upper (Zenith) quarter are the pranas which go upward;
His Lower (Nadir) quarter are the pranas which go downward...

Britadaganuska Upanisha.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (IV, 2, 3)

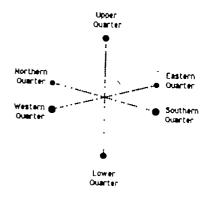


Figure 3

he only known example of the explicit type known to the author is from a much later period and it would be interesting to search for other examples in Vedic and post-Vedic periods. This example, known to historians of Indian science (Chakravarty, 1932; Bag, 1966), is the triangular representation, meruprastara (pyramidal scheme), described by Halayudha (10th-11th century A.D.) and is identical to the later 'Pascal triangle' (16th century A.D.). The illustration in (Fig. 4) and the following literary description are taken from the cited sources:

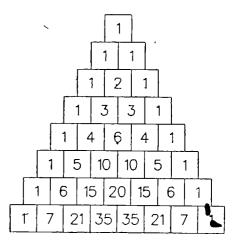


Figure 4

Here the method of pyramidal expansion (meru-prastara) of the number of combinations of one, two, etc., syllables formed of short (and long sounds) are explained. After drawing a square on the top, two squares are drawn below (side by side) so that half of each is extended on either side. Below it three

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squares, below it (again) four squares are drawn and the process is repeated till the desired pyramid is obtained. In the (topmost) first square the symbol for one is to be marked. Then in each of the two squares of the second line figure one is to be marked. Then in the third line figure one is to be placed on each of the two extreme squares. In the middle square (of the third line) the sum of the figures in the two squares immediately above is to be place; this is the meaning of the term purna. In the fourth line one is to be placed in each of the two extreme squares. In each of the middle squares, the sum of the figures in the two squares immediately above, that is, three is placed. Subsequent squares are filled in this way. Thus the second line gives the expansion of combinations of (short and long sounds forming) in a one syllabic metre; the third line the same for two syllables, the fourth line for three syllables and so on.

Chandahsutra (8,34)

#### Relevance for Today

The examples of various morphologies of knowledge systems described suggest that conceptual modelling was known and practised during the Vedic period. The modelling techniques were used rigorously at times, and at other times formalistic and esoteric concerns overrode a deeper structural approach to visualizing relationships between objects of enquiry or between knowledge systems. A country like India, torn between the strong roots of ancient traditions and the drive towards modernization through contemporary techniques and techno-Togy, must look at the past in a clear objective manner, sorting out aspects which have a fundamental value as opposed to the more formalistic aspects where form for form's sake is used without regard to its applicability to the present social, cultural and technological environment.

The past provides some kernels of truth. It provides the comfort of tradition and continuity. It also provides the enticing trappings of

formalisms. Formalisms freeze free thought into fixed patterns which may have lost their validity, or may have been invalid in the first place. Especially in the closing years of this millennium, where fundamentalism is rising in different parts of the world, it behoves us to clear our lenses and separate the useful from the irrelevant. The absence of an objective, open-minded approach to contemporary issues which have some bearing with the past but affect the present and shape the future, would be regressive.

In contrast, India's ancient knowledge of conceptual morphology provides numerous examples

ted in a zig-zagging manner, forcing the reader to think in creative ways. The particle-physicist Gell-Mann proposed a combinatorial structure for quarks, the fundamental particles of matter. Interestingly, the structure of the eight three syllable Vedic metres is reminiscent of the type of thinking in particle physics, though the entities being combined are totally different. In Fig. 5, the eight triads are shown arranged on the vertices of a cube, thus displaying their underlying structure. For example, the opposites are located on the opposite corners of the cube and any two adjacent corners specify combinations which differ by only one attribute.

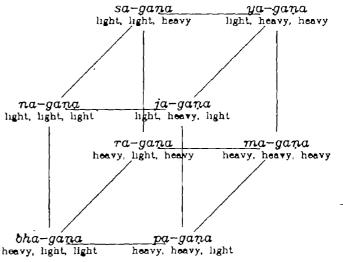


Figure 5

of rigorous techniques for classifying knowledge. The underlying mathematical structure of combinations, like the ones used in Vedic chandas, is used in several fields today. The Vedic and post-Vedic systems of thought need to be examined not in a vacuum of isolated nationalism, but in the context of universal principles of knowledge design. The eccentric Catalan thinker Ramon Lull (13th century A.D.) used the combinatorial technique in his Ars Magna (Gardner, 1982). Lullian wheels, composed of independently rotating concentric rings, are used in various charts for determining combinations.

More recently, the astrophysicist Fritz Zwicky (1969) introduced his 'morphological method' by which various categories are listed in rows, or in cubic arrays, and inter-connecI myself have used n-dimensional cubes to model a large variety of space structures (Lalvani, 1981, 1982). An application of the author's technique to the six basic tastes of Ayurveda and their mapping in a six dimensional cube is shown in Figure 6. This hyper-chart shows all the possibilities and all their relationships, thus combining form and structure in one diagram. The latter two examples show an extension of the morphological models used in Vedic knowledge design.

Morphological techniques, like the ones used in the Vedic and post-Vedic periods and various contemporary works, provide a basis for coding and indexing knowledge. Such coding is essential in the present information age, where objects, ideas, concepts, products, processes must be stored, retrieved and mani-

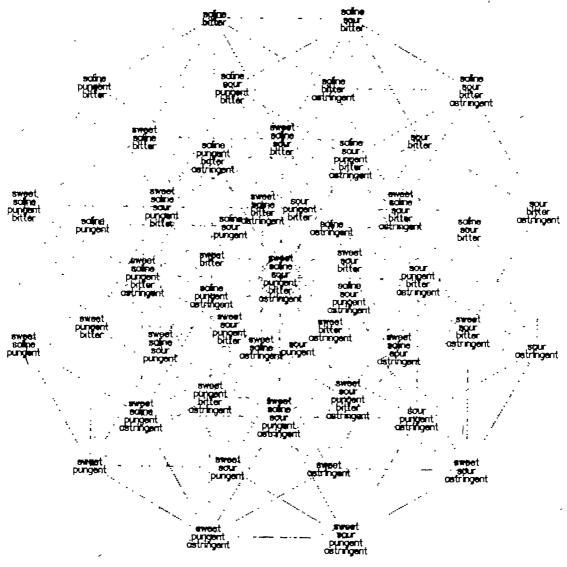


Figure 6

pulated in computational environments. The relevant question is: Can the knowledge design methods and results of the past provide an insight into organizing contemporary knowledge which is growing rapidly and becoming highly specialized?

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## **Vedic** mathematics

WAGISH SHUKLA

(There was a time in England) 'When Falsehood in a Ciceronian dialect had no opposers, Truth in patois no listeners.'\*

VEDIC mathematics has two meanings and the two meanings are quite different from each other. The first is a 'historical' meaning and would mean mathematics as studied and understood in the 'Vedic period'. The second meaning generates from a book titled Vedic Mathematics published in 1965. Most, if not all, of the controversy, the euphoria, the bickerings and the hoopla, generates from a confusion of one with the other. As is quite natural in such situations, neither students of the Vedas nor students of mathematics are party to any discussion in the whole affair. Justifiably, I might

But we may perhaps centre on the 'school syllabus' which seems to have produced the latest journalese. I have before me, in Hindi, High School Mathematics II (compulsory for science students and optional for students from other streams), Parts 1 and 2 published by the Government of Uttar Pradesh. This is the second revised edition introduced in U.P. schools from July 1992. The first edition was published in 1981. We are told, in the foreword, that the decision to provide 'nationalized textbooks' was taken in 1975.

Those who are carping about the textbooks were managing gleefully the publication of 'nationalized textbooks' in 1975 and continue to do so when they can. Thus, to give an example, the National Council

\*Quoted by Ananda Coomaraswamy in his essay Memory in Education. This is included in his Essays in National Idealism (1909; Indian reprint by Munshiram Manoharlal 1981). of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) published *Medieval India*, a textbook for +2 level students, in 1990, by Satish Chandra. This is a revised version of an earlier book prepared by him in 1978 for the same organization and the same purpose.

This 'nationalized' textbook has thus been in use for nearly 14 years. It tells us that Gokla, the leader of the Mathura rebellion by Jats against Aurangzeb in 1669 was captured and killed. Tomorrow somebody else may write a 'nationalized' textbook, probably a revised version of the same since the copyright is with NCERT and not with the author and add the information that Gokla's two children, in captivity, converted to Islam. Then there will be a hue and cry, with Satish Chandra quite possibly the most outraged. Why? Because the information is wrong? No, it is not wrong. But maybe it will not be in conformity with the 'secular, humanistic and progressive attitude' to encourage which is the stated objective of this 'nationalized' textbook.

The stated objective of the High School Mathematics textbook, a 'nationalized' textbook let us remember, is to make the student aware of his Indian 'tradition'. With that in mind, an introduction gives a history of Indian mathematics. That this is a history of 'Indian' mathematics will become clear to the reader only by the end of the chapter because the title is 'A brief history of mathematics'. The material presented is in itself fairly accurate and the tone usual when one talks about the glorious past. We find, for instance, that Baudhayan (1000 B.C.) had a clear statement of the theorem usually ascribed to Pythagoras (640 B.C.): the sum of the squares of the two sides of a right-angled triangle is equal to the square of the hypoteneuse.

A curious student will find, in The Cultural Heritage of India (Vol. . [5 1986] published by the Rama-A Mission Institute for Cul-Calcutta, this and more: The uadition which attributes the theorem to Pythagoras began five centuries after his demise and was bas- 1 upon a vague statement which does not specify this or any other great geometrical discovery as due to him.' Considering that this volume has an unsigned introduction by Raja Ramanna, then Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Defence and Secretary, Defence Research, Government of India, the introduction in the U.P. textbook can hardly be regarded as exclusive by 'traditionalists'. That is, not until you pay some attention to this gem from Ramanna: Somehow one has a feeling that had we not discarded the pragmatic spirit of Buddhism the way we did, the scientific activities of India would not have suffered a decline like they did'. A 'nationalized' introduction?

L here was a time in this country, in the not so distant past, when it was possible to read science without these 'nationalized' commentaries. U.P. textbooks in mathematics, in use in the 1950s and 1960s, for intermediate classes (read+2 in the 10+2+3 formula) mentioned casually that the formula for solving the quadratic equation ax +bx+c=0 was discovered by Sridharacharya in India much before Omar Khayyam after whom it is frequently named. The undergraduate textbook by Gorakh Prasad on differential calculus, one of the best and the most widely used textbooks written in this country, contained a historical note which informed the inquisitive that isolated formulae of differential calculus were known to Indian mathematicians some five centuries before Newton and Leibnitz, the founders of the subject, but as a subject, differential calculus was not pursued in India. A correct piece of information without any 'nationalized' mediation.

The idea of the glorious past is not new, nor is it an Indian innovation. French textbooks in mathema-

tics mention mostly the French mathematicians, the British mention British, the German mention German. The USSR textbooks almost exclusively talked of USSR mathematicians. The Americans don't need genealogy, they let the address speak for itself. Thus one has to really work hard to find that Lofti A. Zadeh, the Californian mathematician (or a computer scientist if you want) who started 'fuzzy mathematics' in the late 1960s is a Tajik. Exactly as it is ridiculous for us to claim that S. Chandrasekhar or S.R. Abhyankar or Harish Chandra stand for the Indian contribution to mathematics/mathematical sciences.

Even so, like all histories, the history of mathematics can be written in various ways. Thus the U.P. textbook takes some pains to point out that *Elements* (the geometry treatise by Euclid) was in its Arabic translation confined to Muslim schools of India and no 'Indian' writer was influenced by this treatise. When it is explicitly mentioned in the same introduction that Jagannath (18th century) wrote *Rekhaganit* and it is not reported that this is a translation in Sanskrit of Euclid's, there are reasons to have some doubts regarding this 'history'.

The basic problem is with the very idea of 'nationalized' information. In the hands of one set of people, committed to promote 'secular attitudes' and 'mixed culture', anything that India did has to be under some 'influence', the ancient under Graeco-Roman, the medieval under Persio-Arabic. In the hands of another set of people, committed to project the 'tradition', the Indians did mathematics either on their own or did not do it at all. In both cases, suppression of information is the basic technique.

Vedic mathematics discussed in the previous section, is about the glorious past. There is a 'Vedic mathematics' of the glorious present as well. This too is part of the textbook material. This relates to a book, in English, titled Vedic Mathematics written by Jagadguru Swami Bharati Krishna Tirthaji Maharaj.

Swamiji was born in March 1884, passed with honours various exami-

nations including one in mathematics, took sannyas in 1919 and became Shankaracharya of the Govardhan Peeth, Puri, in 1925. He gave lecture demonstrations in 'Vedic mathematics' in many colleges and universities of India. There was some newspaper publicity also. He went to the USA in February 1958 where the book under discussion was left, in manuscript form, for publication. It was not published from the USA. We do not know why. Swamiji died in 1960. The book was finally published with some help from Banaras Hindu University (but not by its Department of Mathematics) in 1965. By 1987, it had seen ten reprints. More reprints have doubtless appeared since then and a Hindi translation has reportedly appeared in 1992.

he system consists of 16 sutras (aphorisms) and 13 sub-sutras. They have been extracted from the book. It is quite possible that the 16+13 sutras are precisely those which Swamiji had in mind. We have no means of finding out. Swamiji had apparently written 16 manuscripts, one for each sutra. They were all lost. The book which we see was completed in one and a half months in 1957 when Swamiji was in bad health. It is not unreasonable to conjecture that this was in preparation to the USA visit.

The USA connection is important. The book is meant for the contemporary Euro-American system of education (in mathematics). The Indian system of mainstream education is precisely that system: Cambridge locals and triposes conducted by Indian authorities thoroughly impressed by American universities.

Just what does the book do? The cover design says it all. We have the digits from 0 to 9, addition, multiplication, division, extraction of square roots etcetera. The U.P. textbooks are meant for high schoolers and the syllabus consists mostly, but not fully, of these operations. It is possible, and occasionally it may appear to be convenient, to introduce these rules of 'Vedic' mathematics for such work.

To take a worked out example from the textbook: you have to

multiply 14 by 12. You first note that 14 is 14+4 and 12 is 10+2. So you write



The next step is to 'add across'. This gives 16(-14+2) and also—12+4. You write it below the left hand column. Multiply the right hand column entries, 4 and 2 respectively, to get 8. Write it below the right column. You finally have 16 under the left column, 8 under right column. Read off from the left: you get 168. This is the answer. It is an application of nikhilam navatash-charamam dashatah, the second of the 16 sutras of Vedic mathematics.

There is a standard algebraic formula known to students before coming to high school, which says (a+b) (c+d)=ac+ad+bc+bd for any number, a, b, c, d. Much later, if they opt for mathematics in an undergraduate course, they will be told that this has nothing to do with numbers and holds in any algebraic structure known as a 'ring'. But that will come later. Let us stick to numbers. Here a, b, c, d are 'any numbers'. Let us specialize to the case a=6: Then we have (a+b)  $(a+d)=a^3+ad+ab+bd=a(a+d+b)+$ bd. Put a=10, d=4, b=2; you have the secret of this 'Vedic' method of multiplication of 14 by 12. The Vedic sutra works because of this formula.

Why 'Vedic mathematics' when it can be easily seen to be a consequence of algebraic, 'Western' formulae taught in the same book if not in lower grade textbooks? All the sutras are special cases of similar 'Western' formulae and work because of them. These 'Western' formulae are all available in standard textbooks. It is a singular disservice to let the student and the teacher, to say nothing of the man on the street, think that there is anything 'Vedic' in these sutras which are obtained from standard 'Western' formulae by giving numerical values or by disguising them in cryptic Sanskrit. Have we really been distanced from the Vedas to this extent? Unfortunately, we have.

This distancing is reflected also in those who are opposed to Vedic mathematics. Who are they? To begin with, there are those who want to know which particular Vedic text has these sutras. Swamiji's answer was: in Atharva-veda or, to be precise, in an appendix (parishishta) to the Atharva-veda. What he meant was that he considered mathematics as he understood it, to be part of the Atharva-veda system of knowledge. A piece of what should be general awareness but is not, may help here. There are four vedas, the Rig-Veda, Yajur-veda, Sama-veda and Atharvaveda. Each has an upa-veda, or an associated veda. Thus, Ayur-veda (the Indian system of medical sciences/arts) is associated with the Rigveda. Dhamur-veda (the Indian system of military sciences/arts) is associated with the Yafur-veda; Gandharvaveda (the Indian system of music and related sciences/arts) is associated with the Sama-veda. And Shilpshastra (the Indian system of crafts, architecture etcetera) is associated with Atharva-veda.

O one may conclude that Swamiji regarded mathematics as useful, say, to civil engineering. This is correct but this is hardly the way to describe mathematics. In any case, contemporary training in civil engineering requires much more mathematics than Swamiji's sutras can provide. It is also correct to say that a good deal of civil engineering was done, and not only in India, without the mathematics component of a contemporary civil engineering programme, indeed without a contemporary civil engineering programme. So what?

People understand mathematics in various ways. It is reported that Amir Khusrau studied music as part of a mathematics course. Plato thought that all rulers must be trained in mathematics. We all work under a system which compels every high schooler to learn mathematics. Perhaps mathematics is good; after all, there would be no nuclear energy without it. Perhaps mathematics is bad; after all, there would be no nuclear bomb without it. Mathematics, like all science and technology. is indeed a parishishta of Atharvaveda: you can destroy the world, you can remove some difficulties of

the world, 'improve the lot of the people' as the jargon goes (Ghona and Shanti respectively). It is really unfortunate that Swamiji used the title Vedic Mathematics for his 'high speed computation method' for users who have no idea what Vedic literature means. It is unfair to have to look for these sutras in a manuscript copy of Atharva-veda. It is also ridiculous to say that the sutras are not Vedic simply because their language is ordinary Sanskrit and not Vedic Sanskrit. That way, no treatise in Ayur-veda would be Ayur-vedic and Bharat would be wrong in calling his Natyashastra Natya-veda. Many texts, the Mahabharata for example, are called the fifth veda. On the linguistic test of Sir William Jones and his intellectual descendants, this traditional nomenclature would be rejected. So what?

There are some who don't like anything about the *Vedas* so naturally Vedic mathematics is bad as far as they are concerned. They are not interested in whether it is mathematics or not. They think it is bad simply because a Jagadguru wrote it. You can't do anything about that. The late P.L. Bhatnagar wrote an article in 1976 (*Mathematics Teacher* Vol. X) describing the algebraic formulae, as taught in schools today, whose special cases Swamiji's sutras turn out to be.

The matter, such as it is, should have ended there. But the Government of India decided to promote 'Vedic Studies'. The obvious and the most urgently needed things were naturally not taken up. No effort was made to support traditional Vedic scholarship by providing facilities for students who want to learn the Vedas, perform Vedic rituals in all their complexity, to retain, record and perpetuate the dying if not dead recital techniques of Vedic mantras. That would not be secular. So university professors walked in for the money to write books on the Vedas. And some funds were made available for 'Vedic mathematics'. This, naturally, was not liked by those who wanted the money to come to them and not to others. J.N. Kapur came up with an article in Mathematics Education, April-June 1989, which is essentially

a plea for not funding Vedic mathematics and of course, has a recommendation that 'Government should spend funds on real serious mathematics and the minister of human resources (sic) may announce a National Policy on Mathematics'.

But how will we do that if Raja Ramanna goes on telling us that the decline of Indian science is linked to the discarding, by Indians, of the pragmatic aspects of Buddhism? What happens if tomorrow somebody writes a book on 'Buddhist Mathematics' sorry, 'Pragmatic Buddhist Mathematics'. Do we fund it or not? This is the state to which our understanding of the Vedas and Buddhism has come to.

A reader of this article is going to be a 'layman'. He would want to know what Vedic mathematics is about. The answer to that, I think, has been given above but it may be necessary to repeat it. 'Vedic' mathematics in the sense of Swamiji's book and the consequent literature on it is at most what can be found in any 10+2 textbook on mathematics. You can, sometimes and not always, use some of these rules for computing a bit faster. But you will not understand why. If you need to compute without understanding, you should buy a calculator. If you want to understand why calculation rules, Vedic or standard work, you should go to a regular 10+2 textbook.

In case you want to know about India's contribution to mathematics and do not want to read a detailed history of mathematic, please do read the introduction to the U.P. textbooks. But it does not give a full picture. It clubs Swamiji with that great genius S. Ramanujan to whom alone in modern times mathematics came as revelational knowledge. If we want to have an idea of how Vedic sages 'saw' knowledge, a close approximation is provided by S. Ramanujan who wrote down many, many sutras in his diaries, not in cryptic Sanskrit but in ordinary mathematical literals and English, without proofs, without knowing perhaps why they are correct results. Professional mathematicians all over the world are proving them and working real hard. Here is Vedic mathematics such as is possible in this Kaliyuga.

## Nationalist ideology

S. SHUKLA

THE writing of modern Indian history underwent changes from imperialist to nationalist discourse. after which the Marxists took over and claimed, in a structuralist style, to have brought 'objectivity' by understanding our political economy, and bringing class interest and class relations into focus. They were, as is well known, followed by many others who continued to stress structural features even when they were not Marxist. Until, recently, the terms of the discussion changed again. Said's disciples, scholars, post-modernist ideas, the subaltern school and a host of other varieties have followed on the earlier theorisers. Modernization and modernity are continuing to make their contributions. Some of these sound so much like old nationalist stuff.

Education is a poor cousin in the family (fraternity?) of knowledgeand so, the history of education has had barely a caricature of such good fortune. But one does get the same feeling here, too. So that when a few years ago Gauri Vishwanathan articulated some early notions, later elaborated in her Masks of Dominance, she drew from this ignorant reviewer/writer the most unwelcome exclamation of the 'we have heard that before, old stuff' variety, which was naturally ignored in an appropriately superior silence. For, perhaps among other things, even a mildly structural explanation or statement of what happened to India's education had not been made, at least not in published form.

Narrating the vicissitudes of education has also another problem. While the *interna* of the processes of the economy and the polity are widely studied, those of education are not. At least not by people with wider social and historical perceptions. Thus, the linkage of ideology, social structure and power with pedagogy traced over a change of regimes is a large task. We have now, half a century after independence, the first such works encapsulat-

ing, so it seems, within themselves the many stages and variants observed in wider history. The event deserves celebration—with extended reflection. It (this event) is an indicator of the growth of educational effort in our society. And of the maturation of reflection on it, indeed, of concern, too, that not only has education not spread universally but that it has continued to be for vast majorities an instrument of subordinate and divisive socialization and, to use a strong word, indoctrination. What has gone wrong?

Research is sometimes at a disadvantage in comparison to reflection where social and historical issues are concerned. The need to support your position with\_evidence constrains you sometimes from bringing in aspects of the matter which are not only important but crucial. Even when a point of view is as well and carefully thought out as Krishna Kumar's in the Political Agenda of Education.1 It cannot completely overcome the handicaps of a microscope in comparison to the telescope or, for that matter the bare wandering eye which takes the whole view together even as it (the latter) could suffer from the want of sometimes crucial detail.

Thus, what is the character of Indian nationalism? 'Mainstream' Indian nationalism which culminated in the essentially Congress-led movement for freedom demarcated itself from its more Hindu progenitor (and later peer and rival) as it developed. But an essentially Hindu dominant consciousness was never absent. The secular, more egalitarian 'socialistic' component (heritage of R.C. Dutt and Dadabhai Naoroji) in it triumnhed at least on the surface for a while, largely because the huge working population—working classes and much peasantry—developed its class

1. (Sage, 1991) of which this article started as a review. One can only cite, in extenuation, the weight of the issue in discussion and of the work reviewed. Sharad Patil started his pioneering Dasa Sudra Slavery, too, as a review which grew and grew and which, he says, would not have been published if the first publisher's reviewer had not been overturned by another. I have had no such handicaps. See also my 'Colonial Pedagogy' in Economic and Political Weekly, 17 October 1992.

struggles too, and because socialism arose as a force on the world plane. But the parochial Hindu, Muslim, regional-linguistic particularisms have persisted and survived, even grown, alongside even as they strengthened the national mainstream struggle against the Empire.

While the left and the regional have not developed ideas on education which have any salience, the Muslim and the more communal Hindu have had separate educational programmes and ideas of their own. These developed many decades ago, if not in the last century. Some of them are having disastrous consequences today. But they are seldom adequately noticed in accounts of mainstream educational history.

L his has implications when explicating nationalist ideas on education in relation to identity (or 'self-identity'). It is important to recognize that ethnicity, which has taken the form of nationalism in recent centuries, mixes easily with elements of religion, religion-based culture and cultural identity. 'Indian' nationalism did so, too. Even more than in most other countries, the need to recall a long and ancient past to oppose a colonial ruler, involving in varying degrees, recourse to religion and its symbols, the conflictual implications which this carries in a country with more than one religion, each associated with different ruling powers at different points in time and space, have influenced the identity which education, freed from colonial rule, would be asked to promote.

The dominant Hindi heartland developed even its main language, Hindi, in opposition to Urdu (and, to a large extent, through maliciously misplaced extrapolation, to Muslims and Pakistan). In varying ways and to various extents, expressions of nationalism in all parts of India had this dominant tendency in the Hindu direction. Tilak and Bankim (at least in his Anand Math phase) are cases in point. Later, too, the parochialism of nationalism, in many ways, in different parts of the country, was highlighted even more when the National Integration Conference in the 1960s found that in several parts of India, schoolchildren never saw the map of India. Neither Indian history nor geography was taught in the early grades of elementary school, by which time most children had either not come or dropped out of school. Most of us had not heard of the Chola and Vijaynagar kings and still do not realize that we had Buddhist rulers for over six centuries or that 'mainstream' Hinduism militantly suppressed the Buddhist faith and its shrines and symbols or that the Jains are not Hindus in quite the same way!

A particular consolidation of Hindi in the manner it is now seen to have taken place through, for instance, Ramchandra Shukla's history of Hindi literature. The rejection of Arabic-Persian-Urdu origin words, idioms and expressions in 20th century Hindi is thus one important, but only one of the many expressions of the Hindu facet of Indian nationalism seeking ascendancy. The somewhat obstinate fact of its having a script different from that of Urdu and the rather mixed heritage of cultural integration as well as dominance and conflict of many centuries during which Muslim kings ruled in one part of the country or another, principally Delhi, have always made the national movement's task of forging a composite Indian nationalism tricky. Both liberal and Fabian and science-rationality orientation as well as Marxism-Jed working peoples' class struggles have contended against the communal orientation with considerable strength and so far tended, at least on the surface, to dominate the nationalist discourse. But as is amply evident by now, the Hindu (Muslim and other) parochial streams of Indian national awakening have never been too far below the surface.

How have pre-British, British-sponsored and later education interacted with this phenomenon? While much indigenous education was practical, related to the accounting, clerical and related needs of trading revenue and judicial work of a largely pre-capitalist, pre-industrial society, its cultural content could not but have a parochial tone related not only to traditional literature but also to religious belief and practice. The British, for practical political

reasons, sought mostly to sanitize schooling from religion either of the indigenous variety or the Christian belief of the missionary, notwithstanding a strong proselytizing trend among missionaries as well as officials who wished to 'civilize' India. Higher education and following it, much secondary level schooling, propagated a brand of 'Western' knowledge and thought which understandably established the superiority of the West, even as liberal and rational ideas, science included, came in.

L he story of the adoption of modernity and reason by Indian nationalists is not, however, complete without taking note of some post-independence educational ideas. and efforts which follow from the better known pre-independence pioneers' thoughts. Of course, with the exception of Tagore and Gandhi, they were all in the exclusive grip of the English language and formed, in consequence, a cohesive upper stratum relatively isolated from masses of our people. Even against this background, Nehruvian educational ideas were operationalized through an Azad (a pre-independence rashtrapati who had been demoralized by being sidelined in post-Partition India) as Education Minister.

Nehru's concept of a modern society which required large-scale industrial development, led to the establishment of national laboratories. It also led to a perhaps unintended but nevertheless real dimunition of the country's universities as nurseries of basic and big science, and the underplaying of education in general and mass education particularly, to facilitate the concentration of all available resources on basic industry and big irrigation and power projects. Gandhi's basic education planned for a hind swarai. society served now mainly to rationalize this. By showing how it could be done cheaply, it denied adequate resources to mass education. With a heart siding with the child, Nehru certainly could think of the need for leaving the child's hands free to throw stones or otherwise play en route to or from school and thus call for fewer books and a ruck sack which could be carried on the back without committing the hand.

But even learned and reasoned reminders from history of, for instance, Scandinavian countries, that mass education had even economic payoffs in terms of better adaptability to the changing economic and technological environment could not turn the wheels of educational thinking and policy in its favour. This capitulation to the 'logic' of economic development as it had taken place in Western Europe and the consequent parsimony on education served only to complement that strand in India's national movement which gave logitimacy to traditional communal and parochial ideas by letting them take full control of education in the name of supplementing its economic resources.

The state stepped in in a major way when India's Constitution gave to its governments, union and state, authority over education. It was whittled away, however, by its own 'liberal' intelligentsia. An early crucial instance in point was when, in the name of the right of minorities to establish and maintain institutions of their choice, Justice Chagla overturned the then Bombay government order limiting non-Marathi (English) medium schools to children whose mother-tongue was English. This paved the way for the all-India elite to entrench themselves in culture and power through English.

Lt also opened the door to parochial protection of minorities (even as the order itself could serve as a Hindu majoritarian thrust) culminating in the Kerala events when the communist government was dismissed and later in the interpretation in the late 1960s and early 1970s when Hidavatullah's court further widened the charter of minority managements. Not only does this pseudo-minorityism produce justifications for the already pervasive Hindu majoritarianism through a parochial school culture and practice, even though a secular curriculum is promulgated by state, it also escalates backward parochial thrusts all round and strengthens the forces in education who use state resources through grants-in-aid to further advance this trend.

In the 1970s for all their centralizing, statist tendency, the educational leadership from Nurul Hasan onward attempted to redefine the universe of ideas in school. Despite an educational machinery permeated with the ambiguous, ambivalent heritage of the national movement. as state education departments and even the National Council of Educational Research and Training were for the first time, the world of ideas from the French Revolution onwards, the methods of science which emerged from the technological and intellectual advances of the West and the social changes resulting from working class and socialist successes there were introduced to the adolescent mind. This cycle is now on its way to being reversed in the Hindi heartland under the influence of the other so far submerged half of our nation's ideological heritage.

Ome part of the blame for this lies in the modernizers' ignorance and inability to recognize and build on the forward looking elements of the nation's heritage, ancient as well as from later times. But there are more basic explanations as well. The left never had a significant educational presence, and not only because it was weak. It was perhaps also because even the educational tasks of the people's struggles were capable of accomplishment through institutions other than the school which was, in practice, seen as either a middle class institution or one born out of surpluses in the economy in other more prosperous parts of the world, surpluses which did not obtain here.

Even in the developed world, the notion of education, formal education, in support of radical social change emerged only when Gramsci in Mussolini's prison saw the way to revolutionary advance blocked and realized the necessity of building the hegemony of the working class through many spheres and institutions, including the school. The notion was perhaps strengthened by the observed experience of the consequence of educational backwardness in the USSR. By contrast, the liberal intelligentsia and even the left in India had enough room for steam-letting through the press and

<sup>2.</sup> For example, Alva Myrdal's Foundation Day Address at the Central Institute of Education, Delhi University, 1961.

representative institutions—however limited—for them to be not too concerned about reorienting education. In any case, Western liberal ideology, freely imported through the medium of the English language, was an adequate soporific.

For all its radical conceptions such as elevating lower castes' and classes' manual work to a central symbolic location in education (which had so far given this status to verbal learning and intellectual cognition only), even Gandhi's thought, which some recent historians3 credit with helping build a nationalist hegemony, ended up being not much more than Dewey's progressive education in the USA. It came a little too late, for capitalist industrialism and the big urban life had already built their bastions (or a rationale for bringing about precisely those changes which industrialism needed i.e. manual dexterity, skills of conservation and social living). It served only to help some educationists, who needed support for their desire for (some partial) liberation from the yoke of the book and the examination, from rote and the rod, propagate the ideas of minimal reform in school practices in the direction of freedom, activity and creativity.

he tactical character of their support is illustrated by the fact that Zakir Hussain, the Chairman of Wardha committee for basic education, at one stage could exclaim that basic education has intellectual goals right in the centre for, of the four steps in a basic education piece of work which is to be the core of education-choice of work, its planning, execution and evaluationthree were intellectual. In this sense even reading poetry could be 'work' as much as spinning and weaving or leather work or gardening and agriculturel

Apart from 'self-identity' and the new pedagogy relating to its concepts of progress, Indian nationalism was challenged to address the goal of equality. As Krishna Kumar among a host of other commentators in recent years notes, the idiom of caste

has predominated. Class is absent even more in discussions of education than in thought on Indian social development. We have noted earlier why this appears to have been the case. Even so, class reality, however complicated by caste (and language, particularly English) can be ignored only at the cost of both veracity and utility. The persistence of illiteracy and lack of education among the bottom one-third to one-half of our people results neither from caste hierarchy nor reactionary pedagogy as much as it does from sheer economic deprivation expressed as hunger, non-participation in market transactions or in bureaucratic/judicial activities. Thus, neither does a poor child and its family have the wherewithal for sustenance and education nor does the economic structure locate it so that it is called upon to use literacy and numeracy.

hile Phule and Ambedkar have had real enough targets for attackand some, in fact too many, texts and school practices result from and perpetuate caste inequality-what is important is how far they or their solution are independent of class liberation or economic uplift. This central element is absent in both nationalist and colonial ideas on education. The theme of domination and subordination—present equally in colonial as well as much nationalist thought on education in the content of textbooks and in the everyday regime of the school—is centrally related to the class realities of Indian as of any other society. This is very often ignored, while the related phenomena of caste and pedagogy are shown to be the most significant.

The national movement, for understandable reasons, as a movement dominated by the bourgeoisie which was liberating its nation from the Empire only to promulgate its own hegemony, could not be expected to emphasize and lay bare the class reality too obviously or emphatically. That was for the leadership(s) of the working classes to accomplish if they were successfully to overthrow both class domination and the Empire. Be that as it may, historians and analysts of India's society and education cannot afford to overlook class.

<sup>3.</sup> Shashi Joshi (Vol I) and Bhagwan Josh (Vol II): The Struggle for Hegemony (Delhi 1992).

## Comment

IN Hinds the word for history is *itihas* (thus it was). This definition has a static and final quality. It is as if the message is that the past is dead and gone, that rigor mortis has set in, and no change can occur. Nothing can be further from the truth. The power game requires a memory of past events. Precedent legalizes and justifies. Legitimacy is given by 'past practice'. As power equations change and new ones come into being, a fresh look at the past is necessary and often a re-interpretation called for. A new history has to be cobbled together to serve new rulers.

The BJP are not unique in rewriting texts. The break-up of the USSR and Yugoslavia will mean new histories for a large number of people. For example, the mosques of Samarkand, Tashkent and Bokhara will come alive again and Azeiri, Mongol, Tartar and Cossack clan and race heroes will come out of oblivion to ride again. Lenin and Stalin are already a part of a thankfully over nightmare. Farther afield, in Mexico, the need to be part of the North American market is driving new history into diminishing people who were heroes and building up those who were villains.

Another point to consider is that those who protest BJP actions, the so-called Indian liberals, do not have a perception of history which is particularly correct or truthful. Various palpable falsehoods were fed to them in schools while they were children. Examples are as follows. Muslims and Hindus have been at each other's throats from 1192 when Rai Pithora was defeated at Tarain by Shahabuddin Ghori. This perception/belief is false. The Turcoman who conquered India had Indian generals like Tilak in the army besides soldiers from Hindu tribes. The Mughal empire was built by Rajputs from Jaipur, Kota, Bundi, Jodhpur, Bikaner and Jaisalmer. In 1857 when the East India Company sepoys, mostly Hindu, revolted at Meerut, they instinctively came to Delhi to get the support and leadership of the Mughal emperor. These soldiers were Hindus. The emperor was a Muslim, over 80 years old and known for his poetry. No one in his family had fought a single battle for nearly a century. Nana Saheb, the last Peshwa, was also in the revolt and he too acknowledged the Mughal overlordship.

The second myth is that the Marathas and Sikhs rose to protect the Hindus from the Muslims. The Mughals ceased to be in power after 1737. The Marathas were the most powerful Indian group. They never thought of supplanting the Mughals. In fact, when the Emperor Shah Alam was blinded by the Rohilla Ghulam Qadir, the Maratha ruler Scindia of Gwalior took up the emperor's cause and administered defeat and condign punishment on the Rohilla.

As for the Sikhs, the ninth Guru was part of the Jaipur army which exacted tribute from the Assamese. His son, the tenth Guru, was born at Patna where he had left his family. The tenth Guru was with Bahadur Shah at the battle of Jajan where the Prince Azam Shah was defeated and slain. This left Kam Baksh and when the imperial forces went south to settle the last prince contending for the Peacock throne, Guru Gobind Singh accompanied them and was in Nanded at the time of his death.

The BIP case is based upon myths like the above. They are the victims of a self-created sense of injustice, of Hindus being badly done by by the Muslims. They have diminished all Hindus who lived between 1192 and 1947 by accepting them as weak victims. Their idea of Hinduism is monolithic—in fact, a mirror image of what they consider to be Islam. As Islam in India has 72 sects and till recently, at places like Lucknow, the only communal riots were those between Shias and Sunnis and not between Hindus and Muslims, the BIP perception of both the 'self' and 'other' is incorrect.

The Hazrat Mahal Park in Lucknow is already called Urmila Park after some unknown lady obviously venerated by the MP. Soon the Taj will become a Rajput palace. Here is another irony of history. The British converted the title of this building from Taj-Bibi-ka-Rauza (the mausoleum of Taj Bibi) to Taj Mahal (the Crown Palace), as they could not be bothered to distinguish between palaces for the living and mausoleums for the dead. The MP is following the British lead by making the building a palace. This would be funny if it were not tragic.

Akhilesh Mithal

### Books

## pess, Organization and Technological Innovation by J.M. Heredero. Manohar, New Delhi, 1989.

ALTHOUGH the book raises a host of questions, it is really all about answers, answers that a Spanish Jesuit priest in India since 1960 and teaching in an Ahmedabad college arrived at, together with his team of college professors, when they took education out of college premises and moved from the city to the villages. It is about the realization that in order to 'understand a new reality one must become part of it'. And becoming part of it meant acknowledging the fact that 'a money-lender can teach more effectively than well-meaning, kind-hearted, urban professors'.

Which is what brings us to the questions. At whom is this book aimed? How many educationists would really have access to a book like this? If they do read it and they are willing to experiment with this system of village or rural education or social change or 'immersion', what would be their point of take off? And, above all, if this book is a sequel to Heredero's own earlier publication, Rural Development and Social Change: An Experiment in Non-Formal Education, then what was the impact of the earlier book? Had the objectives of social change been ushered in or were these what necessitated and dictated the need for education that could be productive as far as development was concerned? More importantly, can the methodology adopted by Heredero and his team of professors from the Behaviorial Science Centre, Ahmedabad, serve as a role model for educators in other parts of the country, say in states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh where caste wars are rampant?

These are questions well worth asking because of the measure of success this system of education for development has met with in the pockets of Gujarat where it was applied. In a nation hoping to progress towards total literacy, it might be worth pausing to consider what we mean or want to have by way of literature. As it is, the educational system, the syllabii structure in school, the irrelevant and irreverent production of textbooks, have been a long lamented tale of woe of the educated urbanite. The periodic spewing out of graduates in areas of study that seem to open up few or no job opportunities, only emphasizes the fact that perhaps this rural experiment is the answer to many ills that ail our nation.

What commends itself most in the entire programme is not just its very humane approach but its emphasis on warmth. A quick look at the pedagogy followed reveals: 'Defreezing' or breaking the ice to get over shyness, suspicion and embarrassment. 'Warm interpersonal support' to create a climate of

trust. 'Faith' to bring about awareness of their own latent powers, and 'cooperation', 'decision-making', 'final choice' and 'follow-up'. Considering that this particular experiment was aimed at those who could not necessarily pay for formal education—the deprived—it was indeed remarkably well-conceived towards the end that non-formal education should enable a person to deal more effectively with others and with his own situation.

In a country 'Mandalized' or vandalized by the Reservations issue just a year ago, one wonders how many of those who took sides one way or another were really aware of what the Mandal recommendations proposed or what the scene was like now as far as the 'scheduled caste' was concerned.

Education for Development is based on experiments conducted from 1974 to 1988, and quoted therein is the break-up of Scheduled Castes of Gujarat as listed by I.P. Desai in 1976, with startling revelations. All of us who thought that the practice of keeping drinking water separate for untouchables, of food being served to them without touching them, of postmen throwing their letters at them, are all scenes out of Doordarshan's serial on B.R. Ambedkar—will be surprised to learn that these evils exist even today.

In such circumstances to be able to herd a band—a village, a community of people traditionally regarded as weak and get them to react, interact, oppose traditional pressures from 'higher castes', to break the chains of bonded labour, is no mean achievement. To be able to make them see reason or logic in so simple a project as the planting of 'mad bawal', of equidistant planting in afforestation measures and farming, or inspiring them to generate leadership qualities within their limitations, is the true translation of education to grassroots level.

This is one book, therefore, that one earnestly wishes was a film or had been conceived of as a video cassette. The entire proceedings of the experiment come alive. They have been so truthfully narrated, sans embellishments, that one can almost picture the country louts herded together, bewildered at first and then slowly emerging as a collectively enlightened entity. In camera, the experiment could have served a dual purpose. Not only could the proceedings, the meetings, the hesitations and doubts expressed by the Vankars in the villages of Gujarat, have been relayed back to them so that they could have benefitted from them, but the film could have been used to advantage in other parts of the state, the country, with other communities. In this sense the scope of the book is extremely limited.

But there is another, more important failing. Since education for development is the issue at hand, Heredero has concentrated entirely on the deprived community, with the Vankars as the moving force

behind the experiment. The entire book thus takes on a male mantle, eschewing the role of women altogether. Where bonded labour, deprived communities or untouchables are concerned, one cannot proceed with the presumption that the woman is an invisible entity. Society, the caste system, the bonds of labour, are all biased towards casting the woman in an inferior role. However, it has already been established that women have been more willing to accept change, especially if it is geared towards their upliftment. With opportunities for education or experimentation offered to women, decisions would have been taken faster and changes accepted far more quickly. Perhaps the role of the Vankar women is so inherent to the success of Heredero's experiment that it does not really need to be stated separately. But that is precisely what the camera's lens could have told us, better.

Valjayanti Savant Tompe

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION edited by Dipankar Gupta. Oxford in India Readings. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1991.

FOR the novitiate in sociology, the field of social stratification is a complex but challenging one. With a bewildering array of concepts, a variety of theoretical perspectives and a growing volume of research, it is often difficult to get a definite grasp of the nature of social inequality, leave alone a bird's eye view of the subject.

The Indian social situation has aroused considerable debate and a large volume of research material exists on different aspects of traditional social structure, the changing reality of caste, its interface with class and political processes and so on. Much of this literature is not always readily available to those who are beginning to explore the field. The attempt of OUP to bring out a set of readings on social stratification is, therefore, very much in order.

The compilation under review, Social Stratification is one of the Oxford in India Readings in Social and Cultural Anthropology. It comprises 30-odd papers which, according to editor Gupta, represent a wide cross-section of respectable positions on the subject. The book deals with stratification in India and is divided into four sections: caste, caste profiles, class, and caste, class and conflict. Major theoretical perspectives on stratification are given as appendices to the book.

In an interesting introduction to the volume, Gupta calls into question the tendency to equate stratification only with hierarchy and inequality. Emphasizing the importance of 'difference' as a crucial element of stratificatory systems, Gupta not only stresses that different systems of social differentiation can exist within any society, but also that a single, clearly ranked hierarchy (though convenient for the analyst) may not obtain in reality. In other words, both hierarchy as well as the 'valorization of difference' by different social groups need to be incorporated in the study of inequality, and processes of mobility and change in society.

The first section entitled 'Caste' brings together a number of well-known writings on the nature of the Indian caste system and the principles underlying it. Among the familiar essays are Srinivas's discussion on the distinction between 'varna' and 'jati', Marriot's contrast between 'interactional' and 'attributional' systems of stratification and Madan's much acknowledged presentation of Dumont's analysis of caste in India. Theoretical and methodological issues are raised by Breman and Gupta in their critiques of traditional hierarchy theorists, particularly Dumont. That the vantage point from which the stratification system is viewed virtually affects one's perception of caste is forcefully brought out by Mencher in her vivid portrayal of the 'Caste System Upside Down'.

The dynamics of caste, on the ground, in different social and cultural contexts is presented in the form of profiles in the second section. Beteille's study of 'Brahmins and non-Brahmins' in Tanjore, Mukherjee's 'Bhadraloks of Bengal' and Pettigrew's 'Jats of Punjab' give us a flavour not only of the diversity that exists but also of the ambiguities that prevail in social ranking. With economic and political changes, there are no clear-cut universally accepted criteria of social status and even the most deprived, as Khare's 'Untouchables Version' reveals, consciously seek cultural alternatives.

The urban industrial class structure is only briefly dealt with in the form of two essays on the working class by Morris and Holmstrom. The class structure in the countryside receives greater attention. Thorner's 'Agrarian Structure' and Dhanagare's 'Model of Agrarian Classes' are important attempts at evolving adequate concepts and categories to analyze the extremely complex social arrangements relating to land in India. Ghanshyam Shah's study of the 'Chaudharis' of Gujarat dispels stereotypical notions of 'homogeneous' tribes and suggests that class relations have penetrated in these societies with implications for tribal identity.

The interaction between class, caste and power, the dynamics of conflict and its implications for mobility and change forms the theme of the last section of the book. The essays selected by the editor portray the specific manifestations of these interlinkages in concrete economic, political and historical contexts. The rise of the 'dominant caste' in Srinivas's Rampura and the decline of the 'traditional elite' in Beteille's study of Thanjavur is set in the context of changing agrarian relations, new economic opportunities and democratic political processes. In Rowe's study, the 'New Chauhans', owe their rise in the caste hierarchy to economic power and consistent political mobilization. However, the ritually low castes face considerable hostility from the powerful upper and dominant castes (read backward classes in many areas) as is seen in the essays by Bailey, Breman and Bose.

A book of 30 essays, spanning a vast subject and presenting contributions from a number of reputed names in Indian sociology does not make for easy reviewing. It has been possible for the reviewer to only briefly present the contents of the Reader, doing

less than justice to the vast canvas that the editor covers. The essays included in the volume are well selected so as to present an overview of stratification in India from different perspectives and reflect upon theoretical issues as well. The editor's keenly argued introduction alerts the reader to the distinction between 'hierarchy' and differences in stratificatory systems and this is useful, especially in understanding social processes of mobility, conflict and change.

It would be unfair to expect the editor of a book on stratification to include every aspect that relates to it. However, the lack of visibility of women in the volume is surprising, given the importance of gender as a crucial dimension of stratification. This, despite the editor's opening comments that even in Marx's Utopia, there would be 'writers, poets...and of course men and women'. Again, some attention to the 'ethnic' question may have helped explore the editor's query as to 'why is it that people tend to hierarchize difference whose logical property is equality?' The urban class structure, particularly the middle classes, also merits some discussion.

Minor quibblings aside, Social Stratification represents a valuable effort in making accessible important readings on stratification, in a well brought out volume. It should be of great interest to students and teachers of sociology who are likely to assure the editor that his time was very well spent.

Geetha B. Nambissan

#### SOCIAL VALUES AND DEVELOPMENT: Asian

Perspectives edited by Durganand Sinha and Henry S.R. Kao. Sage, New Dolhi, 1988.

THIS book is a collection of papers presented at the International Conference on 'Social Values and Development of the Third World Countries' held at the Department of Psychology, University of Hong Kong, in April 1987. The volume provides a psychological perspective on the relationship between social values and development in the third world. This is the first time that an attempt has been made to delineate the role of the 'psychologist' in addressing the problems of development in various Asian countries, and in a comprehensive volume. The book breaks new ground in bringing psychology into the development debate, so far the concern of economists, political scientists and sociologists.

The editors begin with the view that the dominant model of development emulates' the experience of the economic growth model of Western nations. This worldview, in their opinion, disregards the fundamental differences in socio-cultural factors and local conditions between the developing and the developed world. The recurrent theme of the bulk of the papers is that any model of development to be successful must be 'indigenous and culture specific, taking into account the historical and social realities, the local genius and needs of the country concerned'.

There are two major questions that the volume focuses upon. One is whether there are attitudes and values universally associated with socio-economic

development and which therefore must be emulated by third world countries. And two, whether the role of the 'psychologists' in identifying beliefs, attitudes and values that are functional to development can help in evolving intervention strategies to integrate indigenous values with modern technology.

The first two sections of the book present various views on the value-development relationship. Also included is an empirical analysis of the general problem associated with social values and development link, given the specific context of the third world. Contributors emphasize the importance of attitudes and values as underlying causes of the success and failure of development programmes. They also seem to conclude that both traditional ethical values and 'modern' Western human values are complementary and are factors in promoting socio-economic development. Durganand Sinha, however, in his introduction, cautions against the danger of studying indigenous value systems through a foreign perspective. He points out how certain Indian values are not appreciated by the West, e.g. dependencyespecially its developmental aspect—and the utility of collective orientation. In a lucid attempt at identifying beliefs, values and modes of behaviour characteristic of the Indian people, Sinha is quick to point out that what is Western and so-called modern is not the sine-qua-non of development'.

Traditional psychological research has been dominated by the self-perpetuated belief that cultures differ widely and that difference necessarily implies deficiency. Other social science research has demonstrated how socio-cultural features of a traditional society interfere with the functioning of modern economic forces (Rostow, 1952; Lewis, 1955). It has been argued that value systems and behaviour dispositions characteristic of Hindu society are incongruent to the demands of industrial and economic development (Singh, 1975). This book makes a major contribution by challenging this and the notion that the 'modernity syndrome' (Triandis, 1971), and certain psychological attributes are essential requirements of modern industrial society. In their introduction the editors reveal a sensitivity towards the need to redefine development. This sensitivity. however, is not reflected in most papers of the book.

Empirical studies reported in the book have demonstrated how it is possible to interface development with given cultural values. Given the goals of development, existing values can be utilized for attaining the same. The psychologist's role lies in highlighting and reinterpreting the entire system of values so that they are functional to the needs of development. A more efficacious strategy would be to identify the means of utilizing values for development purposes.

By asking the psychologist to suggest appropriate strategies for intervention to suit development needs, the book reinforces the traditional role of the psychologist as consultant. In this sense, it advocates an accommodative approach to mainstream development. Recognizing that political culture is critical in creating conditions for development, Pareek in his

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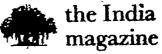
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paper admits that the role of the behavioural scientist is in a sense confined to process interventions in community-based cultures and organizations.

The third section presents strategies for integration. The dominant view is that of reinterpreting and reorganizing the value system to suit the needs of development. Jai B.P. Sinha's analysis is well researched and pragmatic. He focuses on values of dependency, loyalty to groups, sensitivity to relationships in opposition to goals and suggests how these can be utilized to meet the goals of development. Other authors emphasize the need to respect a continuity with old values and traditions for effective management. Even though the need to redefine development within the context of each country has been expressed, most authors seem to assume that socio-economic growth is the driving force in the development process, and hence societal values should be reorganized to meet its imperatives.

Breaking away from the main thrust of the volume, Tripathi argues that the Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm of development is 'unsuited for a globally connected world'. The need is for a paradigm that is holistic and ecological in perspective and one that calls for an increase in the capacities of.4 ~w. eties to support endogenous deveamples of NGO efforts, he demon-\_\_mes of development have succeeded were adapted to suit the needs and mues of the local communities. In consonance with his views, Sinha also points out that while values act as a factor in the success of development policies and programmes, values also tend to get modified as a result of development. It would have added merit to the book if this set of issues had been addressed in some depth.

comment relationship, the book assigns to the posterior of accommodating existing values to the goals of development. It seems that the support of psychologists has been sought to deal with some of the major counter-arguments to the mainstream economic model of development. Alternative perspectives on development theory, on the other hand, draw strength from humanistic psychologies. The book could have well focused upon this role of psychology in helping redefine the construct of development.

Development practitioners will find this volume useful as it is likely to help them explore strategies to relate development to people's lives and needs. Social scientists, educators and policy makers would appreciate the wide range of views presented from Asian and other countries. The book establishes in particular the importance of the role of the 'psychologist' in development policy and planning and brings to the fore a whole new area of research. It could, for example, compel 'psychologists' to address themselves to the issue of the kind of society we want and thereby help to evolve suitable models of development for the so called 'developing' world.

Poonam Batra

#### CALCUITA—Through British Eyes edited by Laura Sykes. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1992.

FOR those who have known and loved Calcutta, as well as students of history and sociology, will find Calcutta Through British Eyes, a book compiled and edited by Laura Sykes, well worth reading. Composed of delightful vignettes written by British people from varied walks of life, both known and unknown, who have lived in that city through two centuries, the volume has captured the essential character of Calcutta from its establishment to the present. This short but unusually interesting compilation is divided into compact chapters that bring out the joys and poignancy of life far away from home.

The period covered is 1690 to 1990, that is, the entire years of Calcutta's history, and the pieces are selected to portray what the publisher's blurb describes as a 'positive light' and an 'affectionate account'. Sykes herself lived in Calcutta from 1987 to 1990 and fittingly has the last word among the extracts published in the book. Under 17 chapter headings titled, for example, 'Society and its Rules', 'Social Amusements and Recreation', and 'Indian India', each chapter contains a series of quotations, prose and poetry, chronologically presented. Some of the authors appear in several chapters, which is hardly surprising since there are some notable expositors of Calcutta life among the British tycoons, adventurers and sundry wayfarers.

Sykes notes that 'on the whole, Calcutta gets a bad press these days'. It has always had its admirers and detractors from the earliest times, like any other big city in the world. Praise for the new Hoogly Bridge has been quickly followed by criticism for the imperfections of the toll gates. And so it will be. Sykes has thrown down a challenge: when will an Indian compiler respond with an anthology of Indian writers on Manchester or Birmingham? Or even London?

There is the almost mandatory glosssary which Indians will as usual pore over to see if the foreigner has got it right with the correct nuance. There are useful biographical notes, and notes on sources and acknowledgements. Some confusion descends: is this meant to be a light-hearted work of the spirit, as one was originally led to believe and as the illustrator obviously does, or a serious scholarly work?

Laura Sykes' introductory notes at the beginning of each chapter are carefully crafted prefaces to the quotations that follow and have a spirit of their own. She is to be congratulated on this and on the depth of her exhaustive and often original research. The volume is also beautifully illustrated by Dean Gaspariyan and its layout is appealing.

Brinda Srinivasan

#### INDIRA GANDHI: A Biography by Pupul Jayakar. Viking, Penguin India, New Delhi, 1992.

NOT another Indira Gandhi biography you say, picking up this fat tome with a pensive-looking Mrs. G on the cover; maybe all publishers should get

together and have a competition of Indira-biography covers. If they ever did, would there be any winners? No. All you'll get is two, equally banal mugshots, smiling or sad, from the dozens of books penned about India's most famous leader. In the event, is there anything new to be said about her? Yes, of course, provided Indira Gandhi's life is distanced by time, and provided her heirs decide to make her personal papers public.

Pupul Jayakar was a close friend and associate of the late Prime Minister's and also a fairly unabashed admirer. Objectivity wasn't really possible and she straightaway admits this as the first problem in her foreword. The second problem was getting hold of Indira's personal papers; Rajiv and Sonia evidently offered them at first, then backed out. Later, they withdrew from being interviewed as well. Clearly, there was a falling out over the issue. Jayakar then went to the other daughter-in-law; and though Maneka's relationship with Indira was brief and volatile, she willingly gave her version for what it was worth.

What Jayakar had, however, was personal access to Mrs Gandhi for long years; this puts her in a category different from Indira's other biographers. Her tentative friendship began in the early 1950s when Indira, leaving her husband behind, but taking her children, moved into Teen Murti House as her father's hostess; they were catching up from an earlier acquaintance of Allahabad in the 1930s, where Jayakar's father was a civil servant. The two women were contemporaries and came from the same class, nationalist but Anglicised enough to be subservient to colonial mores, adoring handwoven saris, collecting tribal artefacts yet instructing bearers how to serve at table and listening to Beethoven.

Their friendship grew as Mrs Gandhi, her marriage foundering, was drawn into Congress politics; it was comented by the time she became Prime Minister in 1966, and Jayakar was generally at hand during Indira's long haul to the top. There were plenty of occasions to test that friendship: when Mrs Gandhi found herself isolated after declaring the Emergency, paranoid after her defeat in the 1977 election, devastated after Sanjay's death in 1980 or otherwise defeated by domestic or political problems, Jayakar was available.

As a beneficiary of Indira's power (although capable in her chosen field of handloom revival and development, it was principally Indira's patronage that led Jayakar to assume positions such as Chairman of the HHBC or, later, the Festivals of India abroad) she readily assumed the role of listener, sounding board and confidante, insofar as Indira was the confiding type. By the time the end came in 1984 and Indira Gandhi, according to this book, was overcome by intimations of her approaching death, the relationship between the two became more complex. Indira was willing, even eager, to tell Pupul her story: she wanted a trusted scribe, and Pupul wanted to be her Abul Fazl.

What could have bound two such apparently dissimilar women for so long—the slim, imperious Indira who filled rooms with her sullen silences and the stout, smiling, openhearted Pupul? That's the story that should have been told but can only be read between the lines. Perhaps they weren't that different, after all; other than similarities in taste and background, they were spurred by the same forces. Both had failed marriages. Both had submitted themselves, and were devoted to the influence of powerful, older men-Indira had her father as guru and Jayakar had her guru, J. Krishnamurti, as a dominant fatherfigure. Both were independent, strong and addicted to power, political and spiritual. Largely asexual themselves, they paradoxically derived their selfimage, and driving energy, from those ancient mother goddesses that are symbols of procreation. Indira shaped herself in the image of Mother India, Jayakar as the Indian earth mother.

Jayakar at the outset admits that her intention was not to write a political biography; during the course of the book she remarks that Indira seldom talked to her about politics. There is also plenty of evidence that though Jayakar spent time with her at critical moments (such as the days preceding the launch of Operation Bluestar), Indira Gandhi would not open up, an indication of the degree to which she compartmentalized her mind. Just as well, Jayakar is too deeply committed in her friendship to take an overt critical view, even of Indira's worst political blunders. She condemns the Emergency but only obliquely in face-to-face encounters with Indira. There is no serious examination of Mrs Gandhi's dangerous politics in Kashmir and Punjab that eventually cost her life. And there is unqualified admiration at the way she ran the Congress party and no attempt to analyze how she systematically destroyed its democratic functioning.

The best part of the book is the central theme of how Indira Gandhi's tortured childhood manifested itself in fears, insecurities and paranoias throughout her life. Jayakar is a shrewd observer of human nature and a fluent writer (though on occasion the fluency deteriorates into Sarojini Naidu-type purple prose or dense Krishnamurti-style mumbo-jumbo). Yet no other Mrs Gandhi biographer has quite so elaborately attempted, or so successfully interpreted, the dominating influence of her younger son Sanjay over her in the years 1974-1980. How he came to subjugate her mind and how she went to pieces after his death is told as the same running tragedy. There is valuable evidence here of how the simmering tensions in her household affected her public perception; in this, as well as for recording the impressions of some of her deceased relatives and associates (Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Achyut Patwardhan and L.K. Jha), lie the twin strengths of this book.

For this is really a memoir disguised as biography; that is how it should have been attempted in the first place and that is how it should be regarded. Its chief contribution is as a source of primary information for future biographers of Indira Gandhi.

Sunil Sethi

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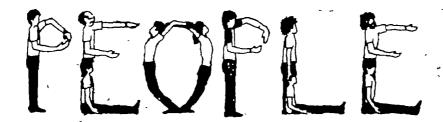
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